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THE
SKETCH BOOK OF FASHION.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS."

Invest me in my motley ; give me leave
To speak my mind, and I will through and through
Cleanse the foul body of th' infected world.

AS YOU LIKE IT..

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

THE OLD AND THE YOUNG BACHELOR.

A MANŒUVRER OUTWITTED ; OR,
RELATIONS FROM INDIA.

THE INTRIGANTE.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,
(SUCCESSOR TO HENRY COLBURN.)

1833.

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THE OLD
AND
THE YOUNG BACHELOR,
CONTINUED.

VOL. III.

B

CHAPTER IX.

Ma véritable profession, dans cette vie, est de vivre mollement plutôt qu' affaireusement.

MONTAIGNE.

THE privilege so much coveted by Sir Francis Norton of flying over to Paris, *en garçon*, for the purpose of trying a new cutlet, or laughing at a new vaudeville, seems to have been equally appreciated by his brother-in-law Lord Glendyne; and still more so by the fastidious Farnley; who, already verging on confirmed old bachelorhood, had possessed himself of a suite of apartments in the Place Vendôme, to which he had recourse whenever London was supremely dull, or Farnley Castle menaced with an arrival of unwelcome visitors. This was his city of refuge against the *ennui* which, like the mists and fogs of the

earth, is apt to infest the surface of a life varied by too marked an alternation of mountain and valley.

Excess of prosperity had produced in Lord Farnley's mind a degree of enervation the natural result of Epicurean philosophy and practise. He was beginning to shrink from the rumpling of the rose leaf, to despise the sun for its spots, and fancy the moonshine less bright and silvery than of yore. To have seen, heard, tasted, smelt, touched, nothing but what is fairest, sweetest, softest, brightest, best, for the space of five-and-forty years, is sufficient to render a man fastidious. But Lord Farnley possessed considerable refinement of mind; was capable of appreciating the objects tendered by eminence of birth and fortune, to his enjoyment; and the unfortunate result of this excess of delicacy and fastidiousness was an overweening contempt of men and things; not amounting to misanthropy (his lordship's digestion was still too good to admit of his *hating* mankind), but an involuntary adoption of the Horatian precept of "*Nihil admirari*," and a

sense of satiety worse than actual suffering. In early youth, a man has the consciousness of strength and dexterity to encourage him in pursuing a slippery path, or clinging to hollow and unsound objects for support. But after a time the effort becomes painful or tedious. The mind yearns after realities, the heart demands some solid ground on which to anchor its affections. The past affords no tangible treasury of cheering reminiscences; the future no prospect, save that of new exertions in climbing up the steep and slippery rock which bases the Temple of Pleasure.

Lord Farnley had already discovered that the orgies of intemperance nay, even the illuminated halls of pleasure, brought head-ache and nausea on the morrow; and to wake for no other occupation than that of considering what he should eat, or what he should drink, or what raiment he should put on,—was to make too little account of the glories of the sunshine and the freshness of the shade. He wanted companionship; he wanted sympathy both in his enjoyments and dis gusts. As they advance in

life, men require an ear into which to pour their murmurs and complaints, quite as much as in their youth they ever desired a partner for their joys and enjoyments.

It was this mood of mind which rendered Paris so satisfactory a residence to the old bachelor. Paris has been pronounced, till the assertion is become commonplace, “the spot of earth where we may best dispense with happiness.” The elasticity of its atmosphere, the buoyancy of the French character, and the factitious vivacity of the Parisian frame of society and *manière d’être*, intoxicate where they do not console, and create a pleasing confusion of ideas, preventing the vexations of life from obtaining a permanent influence. In Paris any one with money in his pocket may be amused; and if *happiness* be not equably attainable, in what quarter of the globe is it more susceptible of purchase, with mere coin of the realm?

As his lordship sat one morning enjoying his breakfast, — *rognons à l’Epernay*, and *petit poulet à la Soubise*, with a bottle of light chablis,—he was amused by a flying visit from

Lord Glendyne, who was returning to England after a winter at Nice.

“What could possibly induce you to bury yourself *en province* during the Carnival?” cried Farnley to his young friend; while the mincing valet de chambre, in his snow-white jacket and apron, placed another cover at the table.

“I hate the hurry of a metropolis!” replied the votary of eccentricity. “One has never leisure to distinguish and do justice to the luxury of one’s own sensations. When I lay down my head to sleep at night, I like to be certain which of the seventeen dear creatures with whom I have been flirting in the course of the day, is the ruling goddess of my dreams; and whether it is to Nourrit’s voice, Tortoni’s Macédoine, or my Château Margoux at the Rocher, I am indebted for my happy frame of mind and body.”

“And at Nice, I suppose, you found the stream of amusement flow so soberly that you were enabled to discriminate its ingredients drop by drop?”

“Almost. Besides, I have a predilection for a die-away style of beauty. A woman is never so lovely in my eyes as when advanced into at least the second stage of a decline. There is so deep an interest blended with every smile, every blush, every change of the countenance! I doat upon their long dark silken lashes lying on the transparent cheek; and the mildness of the feeble voice thrills through my very soul. Were I to choose a wife in England, it would be at Clifton; but at Nice, one has the advantage of selecting one’s *belle languissante* from all the kingdoms in Europe. I was in love seven several times between October and March. But one after the other, all my Lauras died and left me a widower; so that, exhausted by my grief, I chose my eighth goddess of a somewhat more robust texture.”

“Some comely Provençale, fed on olive oil and millet gruel?”—

“I humbly ask your pardon, my dear lord, and a wing of your chicken! The productions of *la belle France* agree better with my epigastric region than with the region of my heart. Never was in love with a Frenchwoman in my

life, except Margery's French governess, who was born in Birmingham and bred at Turnham Green. The eighth lady of my thoughts, like all the rest of them, was my countrywoman,—the charming Sybella Woodford."

"To go as far as Nice only to fall in love with a little Yorkshire dowdy!" cried Lord Farnley, finishing his dejeuner with a glass of iced water. "That is the very girl I prevented Frank Norton from marrying, before he became acquainted with your sister."

"Sybel Woodford?"

"Exactly. A country neighbour of poor Methuselah Cheveley's."

"Exactly, indeed!—for old Cheveley lately bequeathed my idol a considerable legacy. And you positively forbad the banns between her and Norton?"—

"*Not* exactly; but *à peu près*."

"That accounts for Mrs. Woodford's so steadfastly declining my offer of presenting her and her daughter to dear Lady Madelina, when she passed through Nice on her way from Italy. I fancied at the time that her reluctance arose

from the virulence of English prudery; for Lady Mad., you know, has contrived to make herself as much talked of, though with as little cause, on the Continent, as she did in England; *où elle assuroit faire des folies à force qu'elle s'ennuyoit.*"

"And these people testified positive resentment against my sister?"—

"By no means. Mrs. Woodford merely said that 'living out of the world, her acquaintance would be no acquisition to Lady Madelina Rowerton;' and so bowed herself civilly out of the scrape, as graciously as possible."

"And is your friend Miss Sybella one of the die-aways?—Has *she* pined her fair self into a consumption for the love of my friend Frank?"

"*Au contraire*, she is a most lovely creature, all beauty and vivacity. They have been living in Italy these two or three years past; and Sybel has acquired that nobleness of gesture, that dignified and intellectual air, which is only attained by an extensive intercourse with eminent and enlightened society, and which sits so well upon an English brow."

“ And pray do you intend engrafting all these excellencies on the Earldom of Kingcombe ? ” inquired Lord Farnley, with a sneer.

“ I fear not. *My* lady is unapproachable as the Lady of Comus. She wo’nt have me.”

“ Have you tried, then ? ”—

“ By proxy. She has refused half a dozen English lords ; and, well aware that my sole merit with the fair consists in my power of entitling them to embroider a coronet in the corner of their pocket-handkerchiefs, I feel as if my addresses had been already frowned away by Sybella. She would not have Lord Latimer ; I am no better than Lord Latimer ; *ergo*, she will not have *me*.”

“ The gentlewoman has grown difficult ! ” cried Farnley, as Wittenham, who was now prime minister in his service, loitered in the task of removing his lordship’s dressing-gown, for the purpose of amazing himself with the report of the prodigious rise of the Thorngrove people. “ She would have given her head to marry Norton.”

“ Ay, poor soul ! she was a child then, and

knew no better. How can one expect a girl, raw from netting bead-purses and scribbling Italian exercises, to possess the instinct of matrimonial discrimination?"

"Pass a week or two with us at Paris," cried Lord Farnley, now equipped for his morning's ride, "and I will go over with you to town for the season. You will find better diversion here than in courting English misses. The *déjeuners dansans* are beginning. We had one yesterday at the embassy;—a perfect thing, except that there were no nectarines in the macédoine."

"And what women?"—

"Oh several delightful creatures! There was Lady Mary Rowley, in the first place, looking like an oriental idol, composed of pearls and turquoises—her teeth so white, her eyes so blue! Then Madame de Leitenstoff, exquisite as Herbault could make her; and several new Englishwomen—very beautiful, very graceful. The old Prince de Chambord had me by the button half the morning, (talking reminiscences about the reign of Louis XIV. I fancy, for he did not mention a single individual who has lived in my

time,)—or I should have liked to inquire about them.—They did us honour.”

“I dare say,” cried Glendyne, “they are the wife and daughters of an eminent blacking-maker, who, I understand, are just now at Paris. It is wonderful what the march of luxury is doing for us. Formerly we were idle or arrogant enough to imagine that well-mannered, well-educated, well-dressed women were confined to the circles of what we take the liberty of calling ‘good society.’ But we are now compelled to admit that we have mistaken ourselves and them. Last year at Ascot I lost my heart to the most elegant and graceful creature on the course; and after bestowing a sovereign on her footman, with a view to ascertain the exact number of her residence in Grosvenor or Berkeley-square, I had the satisfaction of learning that she was daughter to my father’s fishmonger.”

“I fancy she would have found it difficult to deceive *me* in a similar manner,” cried Farnley, in a tone of self-complacency. “A long habit of watchfulness over female character and manners, has so thoroughly initiated me into the

lights and shadows and mysteries of woman-kind, that I will venture to determine, after a second interview, the exact rank and station of any woman in Europe. The person I observed dancing last night at the embassy, for instance, is one of the most distinguished-looking girls I ever beheld. A ten minutes' interview would enable me to tell you *au juste* whether she is really *des nôtres*, or only merits to be so."

Glendyne bowed with mock humility to this assertion; and willingly accepted the invitation of his father's friend to take a turn with him in the Bois de Boulogne.

"Perhaps we shall see the pretty blacking-maker," cried he.

"Perhaps we may meet my lovely English-woman," rejoined Lord Farnley.

Both, however, were disappointed. They encountered only the usual allotment of *Comtesses en Berline*, dowagering with their lap-dogs; young *merveilleux*, looking and caracol-ing after the melodramatic fashion of Astley's Amphitheatre; and *agens de change* and men of substance, airing *en boguey*, for the esta-

blishment of a breakfast digestion and dinner appetite. They were soon obliged to hurry home; Lord Farnley being engaged to a formal dinner at the hotel of the fashionable Madame Girardeau.

Notwithstanding this curtailment of his morning's enjoyment, the bachelor lord contrived (as Englishmen usually do on the Continent) to keep dinner waiting; to the utter discomfiture of the *maître d'hôtel*, who was compelled to announce that *Madame étoit servie*, just as his lordship's carriage entered the *porte cochère*. In the confusion of this late arrival, Lord Farnley lost the place allotted to him at the dinner table; but he had no reason to find fault with the Fates, on discovering that a lucky chance had seated him next to the younger of the two ladies who had attracted his notice at the embassy ball the preceding evening. Before he had effected a third spoonful of the excellent *printanière* placed before him, his lordship decided that Glendyne's suggestion respecting the blacking-maker was wholly unworthy of credit.

CHAPTER X.

In a vain man, the smallest spark may kindle into the greatest flame ; because the materials are always prepared, and on the spot. HUME.

VARIOUS are the orders of *cognoscenti* abounding in the civilized world ;—some, whose impressible senses allow their souls to be “imprisoned and lapt in Elysium” by a symphony or a bravura ; some, whose ears tingle and whose colour flies like those of Cymon, at the sight of an *editio princeps* in all its purity of virtue ; some, under whose death-like ribs the spectacle of the Phidian goddess on her marble pedestal, creates a soul ; and some, who are ready to bend the knee before a Virgin Mother of Raphael’s imagining !—Others (we are willing to rank them a grade lower in the scale of ama-

teurs) fire up at the sight of a "high mettled racer," full-bred hunter, or hound of notable pedigree; some put their trust in chariots, and some in horsemen; some grow philanthropic on sitting down to a well-dressed dinner; some sympathise more heartily with the costliness of the plate upon which it is served; some adore a case of champagne; and others resign themselves to ecstasies between the glasses of a good bottle of hermitage.

But of all the sights or sounds which tend to harmonize the emotions of man, smoothing the raven down of misanthropy till it smiles, there is perhaps none more effective than the sweet voice, and sweeter presence of a young, lovely, intelligent, and well-bred woman; who, without exhibiting herself a passive slave to the vagaries of fashion, is sufficiently submissive to the tastes and prejudices of the day to escape the charge of self-sufficiency; who, without affecting the blue or the *précieuse*, displays the stores of a rich and cultivated mind; who is gentle and simple as well as animated and refined; who shows like some exquisite object

intended for the adornment and enchantment of human life, even while betraying impulses of humanity that convict her as a mere mortal!

Lord Farnley could not contemplate the exquisite form and features of the person by his side, without a touch of the enthusiasm he had often experienced at the sight of a fine statue or beautiful picture; nor listen to the expression of her noble sentiments and graceful phraseology, without feeling that, among the most intellectual of his male associates, he had seldom met with so agreeable a companion. Himself in the truest sense an epicure (a practical votary of every art and science tending towards physical enjoyment), he became almost insensible to the merit of some exquisite *entrées*, and forgot to distinguish between the first and second glass of a flask of Steinberger, while he questioned and questioned, with a view to elicit those graceful rejoinders that never flow with such felicity as from the lips of a really beautiful woman. He had not caught the name of his lovely neighbour. He knew not whether

to enshrine her for his future idolatry, as maid, wife, or widow;—but at present he saw only one drawback on the perfection of her perfectness. Although her mode of accepting his advances towards conversation was strictly courteous — nay! even more — conciliating in the extreme, there was nothing in look, tone, or gesture, which implied the ardour to please, the eagerness to subdue, which *he* was universally accustomed to meet in the other sex. Instead of forestalling his words by anxiousness of attention,—instead of bending her eyes upon his, as if to drink up his merest glance of admiration,—she looked oftener at her plate or on the ornaments of the plateau before her, than into his face; and was quite as well pleased to listen to the *niaiseries* of Count Hagelhorn, a handsome Danish attaché, seated at her left hand, or to mix in the general conversation circulating around them. She spoke French, German, English, with equal grace; and, unlike the generality of her countrymen, could enter into the genius of the French, English, or German character, with equal spirit and versa-

tility. Lord Farnley was startled. He would have been better pleased to find her more exclusively devoted to himself. Accustomed to see his female victims at his feet, and to hear their chains rattle after half an hour's attempt to render himself agreeable, he had no patience for long and difficult conquests.

He talked of Italy and the arts, with the air of having mastered that comprehensive subject:—but he was soon convicted of uttering commonplaces, by the superiority of tact with which the fairy wing of woman's fancy flitted over its ancient monuments, and modern, ancient, and ever-enduring magnificence of Nature! He spoke of France; of its refinements,—its unceasing variety of novelties and diversions;—and the nimbleness of woman's wit touched the sounding brass and tinkling cymbals of Parisian conventionality till their hollowness rang beneath her hand! He spoke of England,—and the eloquence of a noble spirit soon proved to him that he had never justly appreciated the magnitude of its

institutions, or the sacredness of its domestic purity. On every point where he had been accustomed to give the law and fix the standard, he found the quick agility of Ariel before him;—that he had only to admit, “hitherto I have thought thus,”—“till now I have always supposed;”—and then lower his colours and beat a retreat.

This admission, to every human being a mortification, and to a man peculiarly irritating, was to Lord Farnley (accustomed as he was to incense and adulation) provoking in the extreme. He was first surprised,—then ruffled,—then piqued,—then interested; and, lastly, irrecoverably and inexplicably enchanted!—There must be witchcraft in it!—How else could she, whose hair was glossy,—whose lips so red,—whose teeth so pearly, so small, so radiant,—possess the judgment of a sage, and the imagination of a poet?—

And, above all, that lovely, elegant, distinguished, and accomplished as she was—the fair stranger should make so light of the lord of Farnley Castle!—“She shall repent it,” thought

the bachelor lord. Alas ! he little dreamed that his own command over the future imperative was at an end. In spite of the peerlessness of the lovely incognita who sat beside him, the dinner could not be prolonged beyond its allotted length of *entrées*, *relevées*, *hors-d'œuvres*, —its three courses and dessert. The last *praline* was eaten ; but, unlike the orgies of England, the tranquil murmur of dinner conversation was not destined, by a sudden separation of the male and female guests, to deepen into a roar of obscene mirth. Lord Farnley found himself obliged to swallow his coffee, and devote himself to a card-table, before he had been able to question his host relative to his elegant guest. On taking leave for the night, the object of his curiosity was so placed as to overhear his adieux ; and he was once more condemned to the vexation of retiring to wonder, consider, and re-consider the case. There is not a more decided symptom of an incipient love-fever than that sleepless tossing of an unquiet night, which not only “murders sleep,” but renders the waking hours of the patient in-

tolerable; and Lord Farnley's position was rendered doubly painful by a sort of sober consciousness of his malady, as well as by a conviction that he was growing too old to fall in love;—that he might possibly prove an unthriving wooer; or, if accepted, that the favour of the fair unknown would be conceded to his coronet, estates, and, sovereignty in the world of fashion.

It is surprising how hollow-hearted and empty-headed people who are naturally neither knavish nor foolish may become, from the mere habit of dwelling exclusively upon the surface of things,—of considering the reflection instead of the reality. Lord Farnley was not deficient by nature in qualities of head or heart; but he had now so long accustomed himself to see with the eyes of the world, and judge with the judgment of the majority, that even the indulgence of his own selfishness had become a secondary consideration. He was willing, indeed, to sacrifice all ordinary enjoyments to the dictates of Fashion; but Love is a politician who enlists the egotism of human nature

strongly on his side, and Lord Farnley, (who had so urgently represented to Sir Francis Norton the impossibility of marrying a woman undistinguished by rank or fashion, and who lived and moved only in the sunshine of the world's approval,) never for a moment permitted himself to deliberate whether Madame Girardeau's guest belonged to the Order, or whether he should stand excused in St. James's-street for the folly of enchaining himself to her feet.

"See!" cried Lord Glendyne, as they entered the Théâtre de Madame together, the following night. "Look at the Ambassadors's box. Is she not lovely?"

"Lovely indeed!" ejaculated Farnley, raising his glass for a second survey of his own particular goddess. "And, by the way, *who* is she? I never saw a more distinguished woman!"

"Norton and I are infinitely indebted to you for so disinterested a confirmation of our opinion," exclaimed the young lord. "I knew I should soon hear you recant your heresy touching the lovely Sybella." And instantly quitting the box, Lord Farnley perceived him

a few minutes afterwards, seated by the side of one,

Too early seen unknown, and known too late.

They were laughing heartily. Little reason had the bachelor lord to doubt that it was at *his* expense. But he had at least the satisfaction of seeing Miss Woodford raise her *lorgnette* to examine the neighbourhood where he was sitting; and though he suspected that her attention had been directed towards him by her companion, she looked and looked again with an air of peculiar interest. It did not much signify! A mere Miss Woodford could be nothing to *him*; and why should he desire to become any thing to *her*?

Perhaps it was this self-security which induced him to solicit a formal introduction to Mrs. Woodford on the following day; and get himself included, morning after morning, in different parties of pleasure projected by the Girardeaus for the amusement of their friends. He saw plainly that he had nothing to fear from

the designs of either Sybella or her mother ;— they did not like him. They were in all probability aware of the part he had acted towards them in the Norton affair ; and regarded him as an acquaintance whom they could never make a friend. Still it was pleasant to be even the acquaintance of so charming a person as Sybella. There was something in the sound of her voice, — the turn of her head, — the balance of her steps, — as graceful, as feminine, as even *he* (so wild a dreamer of perfection) had never imagined. Lord Farnley, who held the sex so cheap, — who had been of opinion that attractive as they were, there was not one, and never *could* be one among them worthy to share his eminence, was forced to admit that his most poetical imaginings had conjectured nothing lovelier than the woman whom he had authoritatively pronounced undeserving to become the wife of a Yorkshire baronet !—

What Sybella thought of all this it might be difficult to determine. Although she had thoroughly overcome her predilection and even the influence of her predilection for Sir Francis

Norton,—although from the period of knowing him united to another, she had firmly, steadfastly, and successfully banished him from her thoughts, she had found it more difficult to forget and forgive an individual (a stranger to her mother and herself) who, for the gratification of his own vain prejudices, had exercised so cruel an influence over her destinies.—She had long accustomed herself to fancy Lord Farnley a cold, hard, arrogant, unbending man; and even now that she had seen him,—graceful, courteous, cordial,—she could not overcome her prejudice that he was shallow, vain, and artificial. There was no one among her gay Parisian associates she did not prefer; the young she believed to be more true and candid,—the old, more appropriately sober in their enjoyments,—the middle-aged, more solid in their tastes and feelings. It was impossible to deny the superiority of his manners, or the refinement of his conventional tact; but she assured herself that had they been thrice as eminent they would have been equally insignificant in her estimation.

Never, indeed, had Lord Farnley's power

been taxed to so great an extent as in the society of Sybella. In her he found a companion capable of distinguishing and appreciating the piquancy of his sallies, the originality and cultivation of his mind. In her, a being refined as the utmost suggestions of his own fastidious fancy could devise; in her, a friend in whom he could confide—an associate to whom he could turn for sympathy and counsel. Already he was beginning to renounce his heresies touching the sex;—to fancy that a woman might really love and be beloved beyond the limitation of a passing fancy: that the wife might be “dearer than the bride;”—and the mother of his children more lovely in his eyes than the fantastic nymph of his momentary idolatry. Sometimes he regretted that he had so scornfully delayed till the eleventh hour the epoch of graver gallantry,—of wife-seeking and home-adorning. Sometimes he congratulated himself on the excess of coldness or precaution, which still left him free to address the highly-gifted woman whom his better genius had placed in his way. Sometimes he perceived the impossibility of re-

appearing in English society (but particularly in Sir Francis Norton's presence) as the husband of Sybella;—but oftener far, he felt and admitted only that Miss Woodford was the loveliest and most accomplished of her sex, and himself the most infatuated of lovers !

Mrs. Woodford looked calmly on,—knew that she could trust her daughter,—and contented herself with calculating that an earldom with fifty thousand per annum is a better thing than a baronetcy with six;—that his lordship was a man of unimpugnable honour and respectability;—and that if the worldly Farnley were unlikely to render Sybella a happy wife, the case would not have been mended by her union with the fickle Norton. She argued to the best of her capacity; and in the tone that out of sixty women, of her age and condition fifty-five in life, adopt when thinking or speaking of their children.

CHAPTER XI.

Happiness is a thing that lies out of the way ; and is only to be found by wandering.

SHAFTESBURY.

SINCE the epoch of the green drawing-room at Thorngrove, Miss Woodford (as may be gathered from the preference and homage of so distinguishing a judge as Lord Farnley) had not been idling away her time. Till a certain age indeed, till the happy moment of emancipation when a woman oversteps the fearful threshold of society, lessons of deportment and the cultivation of the fine arts, leave little leisure for study ; and Sybella, at the time she was really in love with Frank Norton and was accused of having coquetted with Mr. Loring, was as

ignorant as young ladies of eighteen usually are. She was tolerably versed in ancient and modern history,—had pretty accurate notions of geography,—and was sufficiently stored with the beauties of English poetry, to have the necessary number of cut and dry quotations at her fingers' end. But of any thing really worth knowing, she was as guiltless as an infant or a public-school boy.

Now, however, the case was widely different. Affliction teaches humility; and humility is the best instructor in every other art or science. While smarting under the mortification of having been deserted by Mr. Cheveley's ward and commiserated by Mr. Cheveley's neighbours, Sybella had turned to books for consolation; had read with a persevering eye and candid spirit;—had enriched her mind with wise saws and modern instances, with all that the experience of ages and the speculations of millions can unfold. She had learned, in the first place, the most useful lesson ever imparted by knowledge,—that of her own insignificance; and in the second, one scarcely less valuable,—the ne-

cessity of forming her own character and strengthening her own soul, by self-examination, by comparison, by lessons of divine precept and human experience.

In a great degree, indeed, the romance of youth had disappeared. The wild gusts of the equinox had subsided; and nothing remained but the mild tranquillity of a still autumn, and preparation for the dreariness of winter. Sybilla was scarcely twenty-four; but the joy and anguish of a first passionate attachment had done much towards sobering her fancy and maturing her character. She had no longer any thought of love or lovers. But she still hoped she might be happy as a wife; and that some kind, indulgent, and congenial companion, would one day or other supply the place of the parent whom a sense of increasing infirmities rendered eager to see her settled in life.

“How is this, my dear Mrs. Woodford?” cried Mrs. Homerton Frobishyre, who happened to be laying in her annual store of frivolity at Paris, for the purpose of astounding her country

neighbours on her return into Yorkshire. “I saw your daughter (I think it was your daughter?—) last night in the Ambassadors’s box;—sitting as composedly, whispering and flirting with Lord Farnley, as if his character were not universally known.”

“In what respect?”—

“As a man who coquets in succession with every pretty or fashionable girl that comes out; endowing them with a week’s goddess-ship, and then bowing them out with the cold superciliousness of a Lord-in-waiting. Depend on it, he will behave to poor Sybella exactly as young Norton did!—For my part, I have no patience with the men!”—

“I do not know that I have much more with the women!” replied Mrs. Woodford, trying to repress the bitterness of maternal pique. “Between the sayings of the one, and the doings of the other, the world has a sorry time of it. However, my dear Mrs. Frobishyre, if you will promise to be as generous in your mode of talking of my daughter, as Lord Farnley is noble in his of conducting himself to-

wards her, I fancy Sybel will have very little cause to complain."

Mrs. Homerton F. regarded it as a very unhandsome thing of Mrs. Woodford, considering they had been neighbours in the country (a circumstance which had enabled her to descant upon and calumniate the Thorngrove family for a dozen years of their lives), that she could not be moved to speak more explicitly on the subject. In spite of taunts, insinuations, and imputations, not a word would she add. Mrs. H. F. assured her it was currently reported that "Lady Madelina Rowerton (and Heaven knows poor Lady Madelina, spoken of as she was, had no longer any great right to be fastidious!) had declined making the Woodfords' acquaintance the preceding winter at Nice;—that it was more than hinted in the circle of the embassy Lord Farnley was making a fool of his pretty little countrywoman;—and that his lordship might be considered as a banished man, as it was well understood the state of his affairs made it convenient to him to visit the continent." Mrs. Woodford listened, and smiled

with the most provoking security. She knew every word that fell from her Yorkshire neighbour's lips to be no less false than malicious; and all the comfort that eventually befel the gossipmonger, was the duty of hastening to Norton Park immediately on her return to England, to congratulate Sir Francis and Lady Margaret on the *approaching* marriage of their friend Lord Farnley with the daughter of their late friend old Cheveley's Thorngrove neighbour!—It was delightful to her to witness the air of blank amazement with which the young Baronet and his wife listened to the announcement. The bachelor—the *old* bachelor—about to sink into the commonplace of wedlock! The lord of Farnley Castle married, — and married to an obscure country girl,—without fashion or distinction of any kind;—the identical Sybella from whom he had considered it his duty to separate his ward!—How unaccountable!—how unpardonable!—

It was very plain to most persons present that all this was passing in the mind of Sir Francis; but it passed even the lips of Lady

Margaret, who cherished a jealous dislike of the very name of Woodford.

“ We are to conclude then,” cried she, “ that poor Lord Farnley is getting into his dotage? He who has escaped so many snares, and resisted the attraction of all the most distinguished women of the day, to be caught at last by a nameless adventurer, who has never been even heard of in the world which *he* inhabits.”

“ Oh ! pardon me ;—she *was* a good deal talked about in Yorkshire a few years ago—at the time, you may remember, she refused the present Lord Loring.” Sir Francis started. “ He was desperately in love with poor Sybel ; but she never gave him the least encouragement ; nor did the Loring family ever forgive the cool contempt with which she treated his pretensions. Miss Woodford at least proved her disinterestedness by that rejection.”

“ Lord Loring is a nonentity, who has existed only to advance from boy boorhood to man boorhood,” said Lady Margaret, haughtily. “ No woman in her senses would have married an

obstinate fool, merely because it was in his power to cause her to be dubbed Right Honourable."

"But your brother is neither obstinate nor foolish," said the spiteful Mrs. Homerton Frobishyre, delighted to have ruffled the lordly brow of her aristocratic neighbour; "and I have it from the best authority that Miss Woodford refused him two months ago."

"Probably because she knew Lord Farnley boasted a fortune doubling that of my father," exclaimed Lady Margaret Norton. "Nay, Glendyne's having proposed to the girl sufficiently justifies the opinion I have always formed of her. I have often heard him protest that nothing ever attracted him but an actress, mountebank, rope-dancer, or adventurer of some sort or description. He was in love for three whole years with the *beau idéal* of Göthe's *Mignon*; and was very near drowning himself in a *belle passion* for the Invisible Girl."

"Your theory is at fault! There is nothing of the adventurer in Miss Woodford's situation or character," observed Sir Francis firmly, ral-

lying to join in the conversation; “and since she was disinclined to form the happiness of Glendyne, I am sincerely glad she is so fortunate as to have secured the regard of an honourable man like Farnley.”

“Well, we shall soon have her here,” cried Mrs. Homerton F. rising to take leave, and crossing the room with a view to the display of Mademoiselle Céliane’s last capote; “and I, for one, am already prepared to mould myself after her precepts and example. The new Lady Farnley will lay down the law to us all, and regulate the code of the whole shire.”

“Pardon me,” said Lady Margaret, haughtily,—more haughtily than her husband had ever yet heard her speak, “there is one house in the county where Lady Farnley will neither be welcome as a guest nor endured as a legislatrix. In *mine* she will be admitted, at the utmost, as a formal acquaintance.”

“We shall see,” said, or looked, her spiteful country neighbour, as Sir Francis offered her his arm across the hall; and she jumped into her carriage, leaving the young baronet to take

his dog and gun, and saunter across a park which had never before looked so cheerless in his eyes. It was in vain the officious butler demanded whether Sir Francis wished for the keeper's attendance. He replied by whistling to his dog, and walking off towards his favourite warren, unconscious that the world contained any other human beings than Lord and Lady Farnley, Sir Francis and Lady Margaret Norton.

“And this is the destiny I have chosen for myself!” thought he, as he meditated over the menacing attitude of his wife and his affairs. “I, who was so thoroughly independent of the world—I, who had no one to consult, no one to thwart, no one to overrule me—who might have chosen where I pleased; and who, having chosen, was defeated in my purpose by the idle babbling of a woman's tongue and deference to the anathemas of fashionable life!—I cannot forgive myself,—I cannot forgive Farnley! It is absurd to attribute to accident this dereliction from the principles he imposed upon my boyhood,—misguiding my mind and misgoverning

my conduct. Farnley has robbed me of that which he nefariously represented as unworthy my possession ; and fettered me with ties and connections unsuitable to my condition. The Kingcombes look upon me as their minion ; Lady Margaret as her slave ; my children, instead of being taught to turn to the respectability of my forefathers as their noblest endowment, are instructed only that they had Earls and Dukes among their *ancestors*. Why, why, did I not follow my best friend, my kind old guardian's advice ! What a home have I renounced—what a blessed equality of tastes and condition ! Sybella loved me—I am sure she loved me ! How she used to run panting to the garden gate at Thorngrove, when she heard my horse's steps approaching !—Long enough will it be before Lady Margaret discomposes her dignity by such a mark of attachment. Never was there a woman so cold—so heartless—so infected by the artificiality of her education. Lady Kingcombe thinks of nothing but forms and appearances ; and——Ponto ! you poaching cur—here !—Sir

back—back !” and a hasty cut with the whip, rendered his unhappy pointer conscious at once of the extent of the enormities of the Enville family, and of his master’s irritation of mind.

CHAPTER XII.

God's universal law
Gave to the man despotic power
Over his female in due awe ;
Nor from that right to part an hour—
Smile she or lour ;
So shall he least confusion draw
On his whole life, not sway'd
By female usurpation, or dismay'd. MILTON.

COULD it have afforded consolation to the young bachelor among the disturbances of his married life, to become aware that the feelings of the old bachelor were scarcely less harassed by the result of his union with Sybella, Sir Francis Norton might have been amply comforted, before the expiration of a year from the arrival of Lord and Lady Farnley in their native country. Nature keeps a vigilant watch

over the maintenance of her rights; and when she finds her prerogative derided, as in the instance of Farnley's interference in the honest passion of his ward, and of Norton's tame resignation of the blessings tendered to his acceptance, she is apt to avenge herself by silently sprinkling the germ of tares among their golden grain, and calling up thistles in their vineyard. She had rendered Sir Francis a discontented man; was it fitting that Lord Farnley—the original instigator of the mischief,—should live secure from retribution?

Ah! little think the gay, licentious, proud, or even the sour, licentious, and lowly, what innumerable whips and scorns, what trivial yet potent vexations, haunt those temples of granite or freestone, (with their carvings, tracery, and sculpture,—their hangings of velvet or damask,—their Persian carpets, Parian marble, paintings, chalices, vases, porcelain, conservatories, fountains,—their dumb obsequiousness of menial attendance,—their measured regularity of form and order,)—the aristocratic palaces of Great Britain! The flag waves on

the tower; “my lord and lady are arrived;” the music sounds;—the flowers are forced into blossom;—the velvet lawn extends its timely verdure;—the neighbourhood sends forth its crowds of guests;—the spoil of many a poetic fancy, the results of much wearisome philosophical research, is poured into the library;—new changes of harmony are introduced into the music room;—plants from the ends of the earth (uprooted among foreign deserts by some enterprizing botanist) display their exotic glories in the Dresden vase on the marble slab.—The eye gloats upon a thousand graceful combinations; the lip, the ear, the foot, the hand, rest only upon exquisite objects:—but my lord is chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancies in his library; and my lady is lying on the luxurious divan of her Alhambrian boudoir, watching the swallows as they flit by the painted windows, and wishing that, like them, she could make unto herself wings and flee away!—

Lady Farnley had not, however, even at the expiration of the twelvemonth we have suffered to pass without examination, arrived at this

freezing point of the winter of human discontent. She was not yet weary of the gorgeous saloons, marble halls, or Oriental balconies of her magnificent residence; she found its gardens as sweet, as refreshing as ever; its marble tanks, with their springing fountains as cool; its lawn as green, its shrubberies as calm and contemplative. But she *did* find—and find with surprise, regret, and self-condemnation, that, though captivated by the courteous breeding and *air de grand Seigneur* of her lord, there was something in the artificial dignity of his address incapable of giving way, even in the intimate communion of wedded life. He often seemed to examine her with a curious eye; to be trying to assure himself that he had not made too great a sacrifice in yielding up his liberty in favour of so obscure a person; to fear that, by becoming too familiar or allowing her to make too free with him, he might encourage her into ungraceful ease of deportment; that she might possibly grow too gay and free for a presiding divinity of his lordly temple.

It is surprising how soon a woman makes up

her mind to any new or unusual position. Sybella, in accepting the hand of Lord Farnley, and deciding that as his wife she should obtain a position calculated to secure her own happiness and enable her to minister to that of others, had not been without hope that the favourable impression she had conceived of the great man who was humbling himself at her feet, would grow with matrimonial intimacy into a more cordial feeling; — nothing resembling indeed her foolish Thorngrove emotions in favour of old Cheveley's ward, but accordant rather with the grateful and reverential affection she cherished towards her mother. The young wife soon found that this was far from the case; — that her husband occurred to her oftener as the Lord Farnley by whom she had been despised and condemned, than was at all desirable. But no sooner was she satisfied in her own mind that she had miscalculated in looking for the intense communion of a domestic fireside, than she set about remedying the evil. The Lord Farnley she had pictured to herself had, it was true,

crumbled away into an apparition ; but Farnley Castle and Farnley House,—the parks, gardens, libraries, and saloons,—were there still ; and *these* she would not only enjoy at her own best leisure, but adorn and enliven for the gratification of her husband and the satisfaction of society. She had an extensive duty to perform ; she would rest her ambition on performing it with skill,—her immortal hopes on performing it without offence.

According to the line thus chalked out for herself, Sybella now assumed towards her husband a sociable but dignified deportment. She was at all times, in all places, the Lady Farnley in velvet robe and golden carcanet, whose beauty shone so bright on the canvas of Lawrence. There was no fault to be found, nothing to suggest, nothing to regret. The bachelor lord's lady was as noble, accomplished, and refined, as all the rest of his possessions. The whole world united in praise of her ; royalty itself assured him that nothing was ever half so beautiful ;—artists spoke of her loveliness,—*literati* of her intelligence,—men of her powers

of fascination, women of her accomplishments. Never before, even amid the triumph of its popularity, had Farnley House been so crowded with devotees. Foreigners rushed from the continent to admire *la belle Anglaise* in the exercise of her new dignities; his lordship's political party affected to regard her superiority of mind as a plea for including her in their discussions;—the young spoke of her elegance in the dance, in the display of their private theatricals, in all that was gay and graceful;—the old, of her skill and courtesy as a hostess, of her tact and high-breeding as a countess.

This was not to be borne! Lord Farnley, who had been for twenty years deliberating whether there existed a woman worthy to unloose the latches of his shoes, and be entrusted with the keeping of his honour (as a man of fashion) or the guardianship of his fame (as a *dilettante* and courtier)—who doubted whether any female in the world boasted sufficient delicacy of refinement to enter into his enjoyment (of a scientific dinner, fine bottle of Bouteaux, and new opera), to play the hostess with an ease and

dignity in keeping with the nobleness of his establishment,—Lord Farnley now discovered that he was eclipsed,—lost in the splendour of a new gloriole, — overlooked, — forgotten ! — His wife had the advantage of youth in conciliating the suffrages of the young and gay. She was more active, more easy, more animated, more supple, more prone to bend and accommodate her views and feelings to those of the contemporary generation. Lord Farnley's notions, elegant as they were, were growing obsolete. *His* taste was of yesterday; *his* projects savoured of the indolent inactivity of a middle-aged man. He was willing to

Doff the world aside and let it pass ;

and had no idea of being at the trouble of outstripping the speed of time, or even of attempting to keep up with other competitors intent upon such a superfluous race. In consequence of all this apathy of egotism, he was soon left behind in the throng. The beautiful Atalanta sped onward and onward, with an applauding crowd still following in her wake ;—while he,—

the proud man,—the proud *defeated* man,—the man who had so doated on the golden opinions of the world till he found them unanimously transferred to another,—sat himself down deserted by the way side, to hear the shouts of the multitude growing fainter and fainter in the distance !

It was not that Sybella had the bad taste to interfere in his projects or rectify his designs. But she made no secret of her own ; the superiority of which was so evident, that Lord Farnley was wise enough to see the ridicule to which he should expose himself in so unequal a contest. Sybella spoke openly, before a large dinner party assembled at his table, of the advantage to be produced in the Farnley Statue Gallery, by removing certain semi-columns of green scagliola intended to support Etruscan vases, and imparting a mean and broken character to the *coup-d'œil* ;—Sybella sketched in the Farnley Album lying on the library-table, a design for a new flower garden, in a specified spot of the grounds, boasting all the romantic wildness of an oriental scene ; Sybella composed a *proverbe* ; Sybella

devised a charade, which the amateur performers of the neighbourhood lauded as superior to the cleverest productions of Scribe. To have protested against the merit of these performances, would have been to render himself ridiculous; and, at the archery meetings where her personal graces shone so conspicuous, and the races where all that was distinguished in the county crowded round her equipage to catch a smiling bow or one of the kind and courteous phrases with which she had managed to conciliate the whole neighbourhood (even including Mrs. Homerton Frobishyre and her crew of *frondeurs*), —he had only to admit with the rest of the world that there was nothing in it equal to Lady Farnley.

“On what are you meditating so deeply?” inquired Lady Madelina Rowerton of Lord Glendyne, one evening when a circle of the choicest society in the kingdom was assembled in, or rather dispersed through, the splendid saloons of Farnley Castle. “On Sybella’s beauty, I hope. Look at her, as she sits yonder in all the glory of loveliness! Did you ever see the

air noble more unexceptionably developed ;—or did you ever observe such rapt attention as waits upon all her moods and movements? Where is my brother?”

“Asleep as usual in the library, half buried in his pamphlets!” replied Lord Glendyne more gravely than was his wont; “and it was of *him* that I was thinking.”

“Not disparagingly, I trust?” cried Lady Madelina; who, with all her giddiness, was tenderly attached to her brother.

“No!—I was only considering the weakness and wickedness of interfering in other people’s affairs, and the blunders we commit in too tender a solicitude for our own! That ape in the fable who struck her foot against a stone and killed the darling apeling in her arms,—how ill did I interpret the apologue when it was flogged into me at school! How little did I understand the moral of letting one’s little apes and little projects, take their chance in the world “with Providence their guide!”

“*Oh! par exemple; vous faites de la philosophie!*” said Lady Madelina, seizing a tiny

cup and ball of steel-studied ivory, and tossing it as if her existence depended on the exhibition of her dexterity. "What has gone wrong with you?—For, while things go *right*, one never puzzles one-self with examination into the nature of the machinery."

"Things go right enough with *me*," cried Lord Glendyne; "because, like the jolly miller of the Dee, 'I care for nobody,' and not much even for myself. I was simply reflecting how much mischief my friend Farnley has produced in his own household and mine, by too overweening a reliance on his capacity to interfere with the designs of Providence. He would not allow Frank Norton to marry Sybella, but chose to make a match for him with my sister; and now he has ended by making Miss Woodford his own wife!—To say nothing of the inconsistency of these proceedings, pray admire what two ill-assorted couples are the result of his despotism!"

"Surely Sir Francis and Lady Margaret do very well together?" said Lady Madelina, watching him with the keen glance of female curiosity.

“They would do better apart!” said Glendyne frankly. “Madge is very unfit for the bread-and-butter details of a limited establishment. She would have been far better placed here at Farnley, to stalk majestically through life with her head in the air, without casting a look at those little nothings which it is Farnley’s delight to manage in his own way. She would have been too indolent to encroach upon his cares of state; but have done honour to his rank in life, and been contented to share a popularity of his own creation.

“And so she would!” exclaimed Lady Madelina. “Lady Margaret really would have been the very wife for my brother. They are quite congenial spirits!”

“And Frank Norton!” continued Lord Glendyne. “How much happier would *he* have been with a glowing, ardent spirit, like Sybel’s,—with one who did not snatch him up like Glumdalclitch, by the hair of his head, to elevate him to a station in life out of keeping with his proportions. Miss Woodford and he would have made the happiest couple in the

world: young, gay, energetic, — enjoying all things, a credit to themselves, a blessing to their neighbourhood. Sybella would have found the sunshine of his approving eyes sufficient for happiness; and Margery my sister, of a calmer temperament and loftier frame of mind, have experienced sufficient enjoyment in the splendours and glories of Farnley Castle. Well — well! — I trust nobody will attempt to make me a happy man in spite of myself. You, dear Lady Mad. who have legislated the choice of my horses, dogs, carriages, politics, and tailors, for the last two years, pray don't take it into your head to interfere with my selection of a wife. Farnley and Frank are nailed up like scarecrows before my eyes. What happy dogs might they have been had they followed the course of their own inclinations; — or remained, in spite of advisers and advice, — THE OLD AND THE YOUNG BACHELOR! ”

A MANŒUVRER OUTWITTED ;
OR,
RELATIONS FROM INDIA.

Polonius.—What do you read, my lord ?

Hamlet.—Words ! words ! words !

Pol.—What is the matter, my lord ?

Ham.—Between who ?

Pol.—I mean the matter that you read, my lord ?

Ham.—Slanders, Sir !

HAMLET.

CHAPTER I.

Scar'd at the spectre of pale Poverty,
To either India see the merchant fly;
See him with pains of body, pangs of soul,
Burn through the tropic,—freeze beneath the pole.

POPE, IMIT. HORACE.

THE difficulty of trimming our course between duties and interests, has been pointed out on so many a serious page, that the theme may have become somewhat trite to the inditers of homilies. But the moral (or as it is, alas! our destiny to be written down), *the satirical* novelist, is permitted to seek new features in the reverse of the tapestry; and, while the age in which we live continues to furnish such edifying examples of worldliness, we have no

reason to fancy our lesson superfluous, or its details obsolete. It does not need to be

A pagan, nurtured in a creed out-worn,

to bow the knee to that worst of idols—the Mammon of Unrighteousness.—Christians, and, according to the verdict of society, very good Christians, rather boast than disavow their service in his temple.—May we be excused for dragging forth a single member of the congregation for warning and example?—

Mrs. Bentham had two children, a son and a daughter. It is to be inferred that she prized them highly ; for they were all that remained of a family of ten meagre little urchins, successively despatched to their relations in England from an unhealthy settlement in Bengal, where her husband resided as District Judge (and as his European letters styled him, &c. &c. &c.)—to perish on a homeward voyage, or shortly after their arrival in the Downs. Four of these predestined victims were consigned to the vasty deep ; two laid in a sandy grave in Mr. Bentham's garden at Ghaucapore ; and two more

had just time to show their tanned white heads and tanned brown faces at the dessert table of Mr. Gregory Bentham's *rus-in-urbe* at Edmon-ton Wash, ere they were gathered to his and their own forefathers. In short, poor Mrs. B.'s efforts towards augmenting the population of the earth, seemed fated to be infructuous; when, just as her ninth son, Henry, jun. began to nod his little mandarin-like head in the lap of his Ayah, Henry, sen. her husband, was pleased to deposit his own in the lap of earth; and considering that he had weathered the pestiferous climate of Ghaucapore for twelve whole years, the event, although his illness was but of half as many hour's duration, can scarcely be called a sudden dispensation.

After a few weeks of affliction and consternation, the widow sailed for England, bearing with her, in addition to her sallow infant already born, the promise of a tenth; which she contrived should make its appearance in time to be added to the list of unwelcome nephews and nieces imposed upon the hospitality of uncle Gregory. She also managed that her own weak state of health, arising from the recent loss

of a husband, and the recent acquisition of a daughter, should afford an apology for spunging upon the Edmonton establishment for several subsequent months; and it required all the obstinacy and all the coolness of Mrs. Gregory her sister-in-law, to dislodge her at length from the comfortable quarters she chose to consider her home.

It is the mistaken custom of most families blest with an uncle or brother holding an appointment in India, to talk of him and feel towards him as “the nabob;” and, so long as he remains unmarried, to constitute him godfather to one or more of their superfluous olive-branches, and cultivate his testamentary favour by annual letters—boxes of eau de Cologne or Smyth’s lavender water,—a modicum of gold-wired tooth-brushes,—and a copious supply of old newspapers. Even after the oriental kinsman has ceased to administer justice to his dingy subjects in single blessedness (having fallen a prey to the pink cheeks and blue bonnet of the last Miss Smith or Miss Brown, forming part of the exports of Great Britain to her favoured colonies in the East),

his loving kindred continue to pay their annual devoirs to his cashmere shawls and atar of roses;—nay, even to hear of an annual increase to his family by twelve successive fleets, without any misgivings for the future. John Company is supposed to be as tender over his beloved sons as the ogres of old;—grinding the bones of all other people's children to make their bread, and filling them plenteously with good things.

But the fallacy of this vulgar error is becoming disagreeably apparent. Thanks to the march of luxury, which, like Hannibal, has eaten its way through mountains, it is now as easy to spend a fortune in India as to make one. People are as liable to receive a consignment of poor relations from Elephantarabad as from Berwick-upon-Tweed; and pensions and subscriptions are as frequently claimed in Leadenhall-street as at the Horse-Guards or Treasury. Henry Bentham, for instance, had expended an income of five thousand per annum at Ghau-capore, in keeping himself, his wife, and claret cool; and his salary having amounted only to

five thousand five hundred, it is clear that his agent could not have a larger balance than twelve thousand pounds to produce as the future patrimony of his orphans, little Henry and Emma. For this sum, which the administratrix was tempted by the flattering sound of “five per cent.” to leave in India, she received six hundred per annum; which, with her pension of two, and an odd hundred scrambled together by the sale of his effects, produced her somewhat under a thousand a year, to starve upon in her native country.—No wonder she found it convenient to deposit her sorrows so long in the bosom of the family of her beloved Henry!—

There is no tie of human affection more powerful than that between a mother and the posthumous child of a beloved husband. As the sea-bird which lights upon the waves during a storm, the new-born brings hope and healing upon its wings. Like a messenger from the grave,—like Paraclete, the comforter,—adorned with a smile or a glance that had faded from the earth as if for ever,—the first office of its little life is to dry the tears amid which it

springs to existence. But Mrs. Bentham knew none of these womanly tendernesses. She had been excessively and successively sorry for the eight little victims, so long as she had five thousand five hundred pounds a-year to maintain them, and nothing more amusing to do than to cry; but she was almost as much afflicted by the arrival of little Emma, who came to claim her share of the scanty sixth of that sum; and instead of exercising her fine sentiment in looking after her beloved Henry's features in her daughter's tiny face, persisted in declaring that the luckless baby had just its uncle Gregory's nose. Altogether the poor little girl was a decided superfluity in the family.

The Edmonton sister-in-law, who had never forgiven Mrs. Bentham for marrying the nabob-uncle of her own children, did not even withdraw her enmity when, by dint of hints and provocations of every sort and kind, she succeeded in driving her to form an establishment of her own. Not content with quoting her to every morning visitor, in the strictest confidence, as a dawdle and a slattern, who by her want of

providence had prevented their poor dear brother from realizing a fine fortune out of his fine appointment,—she hinted that the widow was blind enough to overlook the circumstance of having been twelve times a mother, and to anticipate a father-in-law for the two survivors of her patriarchal family. But even if correct in this malicious assertion, the widow Bentham was in some degree justified in her speculations: for the whole dozen had in fact made its appearance between the ages of seventeen and thirty; and though somewhat expanded by pale ale and lax lacing, she was still a handsome woman; particularly when seen by candlelight, in her shawl turban and Bird of Paradise feather.

It is certain that she was careful to be very often seen by candlelight. When a year and a half had expired from the period of her arrival in England, and two from the demise of the unthrifty Judge of Ghaucaapore, it was observed by Mrs. Gregory, of Edmonton, that “considering Mrs. Henry of Mortimer-street had a bare thousand per annum for the maintenance

of herself and her two babes, she must expend a most unprofitable portion of her revenues in carriage-hire; that many mothers would consider it their duty to dispose of the relics of their more prosperous days—their India shawls and pearls and turquoises—for the benefit of their family. But it was plain to be seen that the widow was looking out for an establishment; and she only hoped, for *her* part, that the labour would prosper:—for who could say how soon Master Henry and Miss Emma might become a burthen to their uncle Gregory? She was sure the whole Bentham family had reason to wish she might get comfortably settled. As to Mrs. Henry's *own* relations, their coolness on her arrival in England was a pretty plain proof that they cared nothing at all about the matter.”

In point of fact, they *knew* as little as they cared. The Judge of Ghaucaapore was not of the number of martyrs to the exported Miss Browns and Smiths peculiar to the Indian market. He had married the only daughter of a hazy-headed Colonel Ogylvie, the commandant of a neighbouring fort; who, being the younger

son of a laird connected with the Caledonian aristocracy and deficient in personal, mental, and temporal advantages, was packed off to India per favour of his grand-uncle the Director, and stationed in a district under the peculiar jurisdiction of the cholera morbus. The lumpish boy grew, however, in despite both of kindred and epidemic, into a loutish youth and stupid man ;—became proprietor of a wife and daughter ;—buried the one, and married the other, and finally disappeared from the terrestrial globe, without leaving any more important trace of his existence than that of his name in his daughter's family Bible, the only inheritance in his power to bequeath her. He had somewhat exceeded his means in bestowing upon her a good European education ; but it was the sole dowry she carried with her into the arms of the Judge of Ghauca-pore.

But no sooner did Mrs. Henry Bentham find herself fairly hunted out of the great square red brick built house at Edmonton, and driven to earth in a small square brickhouse in Mortimer-street, Cavendish-square, than she commenced

a careful enumeration in her own mind, of all her appliances and means of keeping her footing in the world, and even rising above it. Notwithstanding the temporary offuscation of her faculties as a daughter at Futtigherry, and a mother at Ghaucaupore, notwithstanding the fifteen monotonous years of inaction which had brought her from girlhood to the sober half way station of two-and-thirty, she was still a woman of stirring mind — the powers of which were exclusively absorbed in the doctrines and practice of worldly wisdom. To her sprightly imagination and keen providence, a thousand projects presented themselves which would never have entered the hazy head of Colonel Ogylvie, or the indolent, taking-for-granted mind of the defunct judge. The directorial grand-uncle had long ago gone out in rotation from the muster-roll of the human kind; but there were still a vast variety of Ogylvies extant, many of them “well to do in the world,” most of them better than herself: and above all, there was the representative of the consanguineous peerage, the Earl of Cairngraeme; who, although at

present unconscious of affinity to the handsome widow in the shawl turban and bird of paradise feather, might at any time be forced into an acknowledgment of Henry Bentham's widow as his second cousin. In her own opinion this was equivalent to an addition of one hundred per annum to her narrow income.

CHAPTER II.

Pride in the great, is hateful ;—in the wise, ridiculous ;—but beggarly pride is a rational vanity which I am inclined to applaud and excuse.

GOLDSMITH'S ESSAYS.

INTERESTED people are generally free from the over-weening influence of self-conceit. They are aware that too strong a reliance on their own judgment and too fond a confidence in their own merits, may lead to the defeature of the darling projects of their cupidity.

Many women, after vegetating thirteen years at Ghaucapore, where they presented the only fair copy of the Venus de Medicis to the wonder of some thousands of currie-coloured heathens, might have been induced to dream themselves into supremacy of mind, body, and estate. But Mrs. Henry Bentham knew better.

Having proportioned her pretensions to the small dimensions of her house in Mortimer-street, she laid the first foundations of becoming somebody by the self-conviction of being nobody. But many avowals are highly expedient to make to ourselves, which it is by no means necessary to confide to other people ; and with all her boarding-school ignorance, the lady was wise enough to be aware that humility is a virtue in the great, and a blunder in the little. To have gone about the world making professions of personal insignificance, would have been an impertinence as well as a social suicide. Her immediate object was to effect an entrance into the Ogylvie family ; and whether compassed by storm or stratagem,—*en échelon*, or by scaling ladders,—there could be no occasion to lower her colours previous to the onset. Judging the world after her own nature,—and few persons adopt any other standard of comparison,—she felt satisfied that she had a far better chance of being recognized by her lofty kindred, as the handsome widow of “the late eminent Judge Bentham of Ghaucaapore, a daughter of the late

distinguished Colonel Ogylvie, of the Honourable East India Company's Bengal Establishment," than as poor Mrs. Henry Bentham struggling through life with two small children, and one small pension, in a small lodging-house at the west end of the town. Her ulterior objects must in either case remain for gradual development; the main point, at present, was to be permitted to call cousins with the Earl of Cairn-græme.

Now, in addition to this highly ornamental head of the family, there resided in the metropolis a certain old Mrs. Mac Winnepeg, a widowed sister of her father; and a very fashionable Sir Colin and Lady Ogylvie, cousins to them all;—and (as the hazy Colonel would have expressed himself, had he survived to witness his daughter's manœuvres) Mrs. Henry determined to commence her attack by a skirmish with the outposts. Aware that no intercourse had subsisted between Futttygherry and the Mac Winnepeg family since the commandant's union with her mother deprived him of his cog-

nomen of "the Nabob," she indited a very pleasing amiable reading letter to her aunt, to accompany a brown cachemere not much the worse for wear, and a Trichinopoly chain, from the irritation of which she had been accustomed to shrink every time she put it on, as from the wiry legs of a cock-chaffer. Both were tendered to Mrs. Mac Winnepeg's acceptance, as pledges of the regard of a deceased brother, who had departed this life in the midst of projects of reunion with his beloved family.

The scheme succeeded *à merveille*. Mrs. Mac, although of opinion that ten years was a long time for the peace offerings to have been on the road to her residence in Gower-street, did justice to Mrs. Bentham's prudence in securing her from the outlay of King's duties and Company's duties, by being the bearer of her father's legacy; and, without exactly understanding whether her "affectionate niece Margaret Bentham," were widow or wife, a visitor or a resident in her native country—she directed her purple chariot with its fubsy coach-horses, globular coachman, and rubicund footman, to Morti-

mer-street on the following morning;—the whole equipage looking like the triumphal car of Apoplexy.

Mrs. Mac Winnepeg was a stirring, meddling, talking, managing body, at all times oppressed with a multiplicity of business which was no business at all, or at least no business of hers; who, conceiving that sensible people have no leisure to be sick or sorry, found at seventy-eight her engagements in this world so numerous that she should have no time to die for many years to come. As she was more wealthy than wise, many of her relatives thought it better to submit to her interference in their affairs, than to leave her to seek among strangers a butt for her mania for management, and an heir for her property. The notion of a new niece to be fidgeted by her officiousness was very delightful; and when, after a quarter of an hour passed in Mortimer-street in shaking her head over the long-forgotten demise of “my brother the kernel,” while her eyes were busily employed in a survey of every article of furniture in the room, and her mind in forming in-

ferences respecting the pecuniary condition of their proprietess, she discovered that the new niece was quite in circumstances to be advised and patronized, and pushed here and *pronéd* there, without the absolute ignominy of indigence,—she became quite affectionate.

“And pray, my dear ma’am, how comes it that you have not waited upon your father’s fashionable cousin in Portman-square?—Quite a great man, Sir Colin,—quite a fashionable, my Lady Ogylvie;—wax candles in the steward’s room, and all sorts of profligacy.”

“I know nothing of the Ogylvies. I considered it my duty, madam, in the first instance to pay my respects to the beloved sister of my late lamented father.”

“My dear Mrs. Benson, I’m sure you do me much honour,” said Mrs. Mac, rolling about in a gratified manner on her chair, with her eyes peering at a pair of carved bamboo matchpots.

“Those things are thought curious, I find, in this country,” observed Mrs. Bentham in reply to her investigating looks. “Perhaps you will allow me to order them put into your carriage?”

“Ma’am I’m sure you’re very good;—it would be quite a robbery. Thank you, thank you, my dear niece,—no need to put them in paper;—with your leave I will take them in my muff. I’m sure I’m quite—But as I was saying ma’am, Lady Ogylvie, although one of your fal-lal fine ladies, is a person made much of in the great world; and it would be as well perhaps, considering the near connexion, not to say relationship, that you were at least on what may be called visiting terms in Portman-square.”

“I am aware of having so little to offer as a temptation, to any person not influenced by the same benevolent kindness as yourself,” said Mrs. Henry with an air of proud humility, “that nothing would induce me to seek the acquaintance of a fine lady, such as you describe the wife of my father’s cousin.”

“Oh! pray, my dear ma’am, don’t mention it!—Inducement, indeed!—Who was her ladyship, I should like to know, before her marriage with Sir Colin, that *she* should presume to think disparagingly of any member of the Ogylvie family? No, no! my dear Mrs. Benson,—

blood is thicker than water; and when *I* take you with me to call on Sir Colin's fashionable wife, I should very much like to see her turn up her nose (though *that*, by the way, poor thing! is a thing nature's done for her,—nose like an inverted comma!)—at any person whom *I* choose to bring forward as the daughter of my brother the kernel."

"Oh! my dear madam—under *your* protection—"

"Well then, the business may as well be settled at once. I'll call for you the day after to-morrow on my way to Portman-square; I meet the Ogylvies at dinner to day at our cousin Lady Macrurie's, and will take an opportunity for the explanation. And now, ma'am, I fear I must be running away; for I have seen a spot or two on the window, and heard a little spitting on the fire, which makes me apprehend a rainy afternoon; and, thank God, even in the flighty age we live in, I am enough of a Christian to consider the poor dumb brutes committed to my mercy. Ma'am, I would not take my horses out in the rain to please the

Emperor. Thank you, Mrs. Benson, thank you,—don't trouble yourself to ring again—— At the door, *I* warrant them—my servants know better than to keep *me* waiting. Mrs. Benson, good morning !”

“Thus far all succeeds to admiration,” mused Mrs. Henry, as she stood before the fire and the looking-glass above, whose reflections satisfied the doubt she had risen to determine, whether her dress was likely to confirm the impressions she had been desirous of making on her aunt. “An introduction to the Ogylvies secured, I have little doubt that an acquaintance with the family of Cairngraeme”—

“I beg pardon, ma'am,” said the squeaking voice of Mrs. Mac Winnepeg, who had re-ascended the stairs and re-entered the half-open drawing-room door, “but I quite forgot to mention to you what I always consider it a suitable suggestion to make to my friends arriving from Indy, that you can't get those two little creatures you spoke of just now vaccinated too soon. Done already in Calcutta?— Yes, ma'am, I don't doubt it. But recollect the difference between the operation performed

in England by an English practitioner with the assistance of a healthy English subject, and"—

"You are right, my dear madam, I had not thought of all these things; but be assured your friendly suggestions are not thrown away. Have you any practitioner immediately under your patronage, whom you recommend on such occasions?—or do you think I may safely confide in a very excellent apothecary of the name of Green, whom I am in the habit of employing?"

"I should advise you to confide in the very excellent apothecary of the name of Green," said Mrs. Mac Winnepeg sharply, as she once more commenced her descent of the narrow staircase. It struck her that there was an air of poor relationship about the altitude, both of the hall and footman, to render a prudent aunt scrupulous about recommending tradesmen, and becoming security for family expenses.

CHAPTER III.

Tell those who brave it most
They beg for more by spending,
And, in their greatest cost,
Seek nothing but commending.

The Soul's Errand. SYLVESTER.

THERE was nothing, however, of poor relationship,—nothing but what was flattering to the vanity of all parties,—in the aspect of the mansion to which Mrs. Henry Bentham was pompously escorted by Mrs. Mac on the following day. Sir Colin Ogylvie's residence in Portman-square, might have been pointed out to the admiration of a foreigner, as one of those temples of English luxury where the progress of effeminacy is daily storing up its superfluous treasures; where the baubles of yesterday are rendered obsolete by the trinkets of

to-day; where the labours of life are superseded by a waste of mechanical effort; where ease is made a toil, and enjoyment an exercise; where the useful and ornamental arts are incessantly devoted to the task of raising trophies to the golden idleness of some very ordinary specimen of the dust of the earth.

The lady from Ghauca pore, accustomed at best to the semi-barbarian magnificence of Indostan, was more struck than was commonly the case with Lady Ogylvie's visitors, by the hall of Portland stone far whiter than marble, the well carpeted vestibule, the winding staircase, with its gilt balustrade and cable of crimson silk;—the doors of varnished mahogany, with handles of Mont Cenis crystal turning silently on their patent hinges,—the drawing-rooms hung with draperies of pale green damask and muslin,—the luxurious divans and ottomans of cashmere,—the fauteuils with gilt frames,—the stoves of resplendent steel,—the vases of Sèvres, Dresden, and alabaster;—of *vermeil* from Paris, and malachite from St.

Petersburgh;—the cabinets of porcelain, and tables of mosaic;—the chests of lacquer, and candelabra of or-moulu. But she was almost equally impressed by the loveliness of the idol enshrined amid all this gorgeous magnificence, and by the courtesy with which she welcomed Mrs. Mac Winnepeg's announcement of "Mrs. Benson, our new relative from Indy." Had she not, indeed, been a woman of some discernment, she might have been deceived into a notion that the blandishments so readily lavished upon her by Lady Ogylvie,—her expressions of delight at the unexpected discovery of so interesting a relative, and declarations of anxiety that the little Bensons should become the chosen playmates and associates of her own little Colin and Clara,—were, as they affected to be, tributes to her personal merits and attractions. But Mrs. Henry was herself too cunning a poacher not to be vigilantly on the look out for springes in the grass; and had no difficulty in discovering that her fair and fashionable ladyship was most suspiciously eager to

conciliate Mrs. Mac Winnepeg by this exuberant graciousness towards her protégée. She saw that Lady Ogylvie, in spite of her bright blue eyes, lily-white hands, tiny feet, and silvery accents,—in spite of the mechlin and cambric and silk in which she was enfolded,—in spite of the Sèvres and Dresden,—bronze and alabaster,—morocco and tabby,—exotics and trinkets,—with which she was surrounded,—was by no means above the meanness of paying court to a maundering old woman, who never opened her mouth but to find fault or give advice.

The truth was, that Lady Ogylvie was one of those prodigal daughters of the earth who occupy their idleness with seeing every thing, and wanting every thing they see; and who regard the desire of acquisition as a sufficient demonstration of their right of possession. The beautiful and spoiled daughter of very silly parents, she had fancied that her conquest of a man of six thousand a year, would place six thousand a year at her disposal for the gratification of those luxurious whims and fan-

cies which she had been assured, as a girl, she should be able to realize as a married woman; and, on discovering how exactly Sir Colin Ogylvie's income was appropriated to the maintenance of his establishment, and how very small a portion of it remained applicable to the acquisition of new lace and old china, she felt and showed herself somewhat inclined to

Pout upon her fortune and her love!

But, having scrupulously specified the amount of her pin-money, and allotted, on the birth of her two children, the additional sum he considered adequate to their expenditure, Sir Colin, or Sir Colin's agent, thought he had done enough. Too busy with his clubs, his stud, his constituents, and his parliamentary duties, to give much heed to her proceedings, the fashionable husband gloried in seeing his wife so well dressed, and her boudoir so elegantly furnished, without inquiring whether the quarterly balance of revenue and expenditure were in favour of his lady or her creditors; and Lady Ogylvie, who had already begun to discover that to be in debt is to be in danger, and

that the existing claims of Albemarle-street and Hanway-yard on her exchequer, forbad the addition of any more josses, mandarins or dragon incense pots, to her collection for some time to come, chose to submit to the degradation of toadying a disagreeable old woman, in the view of cajoling herself into her last will and testament, rather than renounce her passion for the toys and gewgaws so much admired by her female visitors, so much lauded by the dealers in curiosities,—miscalled objects of *virtù*. She well knew that Mrs. MacWinnepeg was the strangest old woman in the world; a hoarder of backs of letters,—stray pins,—strings of parcels,—packing cases,—and all the unaccountable treasures of penny wisdom. But she also knew that, if not “pound foolish,” her penny-wise relative was pound generous; had presented little Clara, her godchild, with a bag of one hundred guineas on each of her succeeding birthdays; inducing an expectation in the mind of little Clara’s father and mother, that a large share, at least of her fifty thousand pounds, would follow in the same direction at her death; and

this expectation having once taken possession of Lady Ogylvie, she spared no sacrifice of pride or comfort to secure its realization. Heedless prodigality had made her mercenary; and, by squandering her own money without measure or discretion, she had placed herself under the necessity of becoming a mean and craving calculator on the generosity of other people.

“And so Sir Colin has been making a ninny of himself in the House?” said Mrs. Mac Winnepeg, suddenly interrupting Lady Ogylvie’s redundant civilities to the cousin from India. “I see by the Morning Post, that his speech on the currency question was the most absurd exposure of ignorance and presumption ever heard within the walls of Parliament; and the John Bull goes so far as to call him——have you heard my dear Lady Ogylvie, what the John Bull calls him?”—

“It is not very important,” replied her ladyship, colouring to the very roots of her glossy ringlets. “The abuse of a party-paper proves nothing.”

“Why what *should* he know about the cur-

rency question?" persisted Mrs. Mac. "Sir Colin is not a monied man,—has never lived among monied people,—has no notion of business;—if he were to talk politics, even at his own dinner-table, nobody would listen to him; and what can induce him to get on his legs for the pleasure of exposing himself before three or four hundred people, all wiser than himself, is more than I can take upon me to guess."

"I have no doubt, my dear madam, that Sir Colin has very good reasons for what he does, however bad you may adjudge those for what he says. At all events, Lord Cairngræme, for whose borough he sits, is perfectly satisfied."

"I dare say he is!—My Lord Cairngræme is blockhead enough to fancy that the world is as fond of the name of Ogylvie, and as proud of seeing it in print as himself; and provided the public journals make frequent mention of Sir Colin, if only to make game of him, our noble cousin fancies it a proof of his importance in the eyes of the public!—I wish poor Sir Colin had a better adviser, for I really know no one who stands more in need of counsel."

“You should favour him more frequently with *your* kind advice,” said Lady Ogylvie, soothingly, although she was bursting with indignation, at finding herself so hectored before her new cousin. When will you come and dine with us Mrs. MacWinnepeg, and try to convert Ogylvie to your side of the question?”—

“When you can manage to eat your dinner at a rational hour. The last time I came here it was at three weeks’ notice; and with the pleasant announcement on your card that I was to be kept starving till half past seven o’clock.—(*I* remember, by the way, when it was thought a heinous thing in the Prince of Wales to postpone his dinner hour so late as *six*!) But lucky indeed might I have thought myself if I could have got a morsel of dinner at half past seven! At eight, if you’ll believe me, my dear Mrs. Benson, only one out of a dozen guests had arrived; and when we sat down, at a quarter before nine (a quarter before *nine*, ma’am!) the soup tasted as if it had been iced,—the turbot as if cooked in cold water; and the ice and jellies were in a state of dissolution!”

“ My friend Lady Sycamore is so very uncertain in her hours ! ” pleaded Lady Ogylvie.

“ Then, my dear ma’am, let me beg you will either pay me the respect of not inviting me to meet her, or of sitting down to table at the invitation hour. I am not a Countess, like my Lady Sycamore,—nor a fine lady, like my Lady Ogylvie,—but I *have* seen a little good society in the course of my life ; and my notion of high-breeding is—‘ Sit down to table as soon as *one* lady is arrived after the hour at which you invite your company ! ’ *That* was the late Lord Abercorn’s rule ;—a nobleman of nobler tone and manners than we are likely to see again in a hurry.”

“ Well, my dear Mrs. Mac Winnepeg, if you will dine with us on Wednesday next, I promise you to sit down to table at seven o’clock precisely ; provided I can prevail on our friend Mrs. Henry Bentham (our relative I should rather say) to be the first lady arriving after that hour ? ”

“ With all my heart ! ” cried the fussy Mrs. Mac, delighted to show her importance with

persons of such fashion as the Ogylvies, to a person of such unimportance as her relation from India. “I will bring Mrs. Henry Benson with me.”

She did not think it necessary to wait for an affirmative of acceptance from an individual having so very narrow a staircase and a veil of imitation lace; and the visit terminated with as superfluous an expenditure of congees and salutations, as a private audience between his majesty the King of Bantam and the viceroy of one of his provinces.

CHAPTER IV.

But when some one peculiar quality
Doth so possess a man that it doth draw,
All his effects, his spirits, and his powers
In their confluxions, all to run one way,
This may be truly said to be a humour.

BEN JONSON.

“THUS far into the bowels of the land” of promise,—thus far into the midst of her ancestral tribe, did Mrs. Henry march without check or mischance. It was a very satisfactory circumstance to her, when next Mrs. Gregory of Edmonton, made her appearance in Mortimer-street (with a carriage full of snub-nosed children on their way to the dentist’s) to state that she was going to dine the following day in Portman-square with her cousin Sir Colin Ogilvie; and that she was just returned from an airing

with her aunt Mrs. Mac Winnepeg; the plebeianism of whose name she contrived to slur into something resembling MacWyndham. The sister-in-law coloured with vexation, but said nothing;—nothing, at least, till she arrived at Edmonton, and favoured poor Gregory with a furious lecture on the superfluous generosity of his proceedings towards his brother's widow and brother's children; “since it now appeared that Mrs. Henry was related to all the lords and ladies in the land, and could find plenty of friends when it suited her purpose to be doing well in the world. Pray why had she not consigned over little Dick, Tom, Bob, and Alfred, Miss Sophy, Miss Maria, and Charlotte, and Lucy, to this rich Mrs. Maquindane; instead of burdening poor Henry Bentham's poor brother, who was already overwhelmed with poor little innocents of his own? And what thanks had Gregory ever got, she should like to know, for all the trouble and expense he had been at with his sister-in-law?” Mrs. Gregory would have readily made up her mind never to go near Mortimer-street again, but that being an inquisitive and

gossiping woman she was already curious to know how the dinners of the fashionable Lady Ogylvie were served, and how her sister-in-law got on among so many fine people.

Curiosity, indeed, is the vice of most idle people, whether fashionable or unfashionable. Even Lord and Lady Cairngræme, on learning from Lady Ogylvie that their eccentric kinswoman Mrs. Mac Winnepeg had discovered a new branch of the Ogylvie family in the shape of a handsome cousin from India, expressed themselves anxious for a sight of this unexpected pretendant to a share of the old lady's property ; and the Earl and Countess were accordingly, as Mrs. Henry earnestly desired they might be, among the expected guests at the approaching dinner party. Lady Ogylvie, indeed, hung too closely upon them as her passport into the great world, to disregard any wish of theirs within her means of gratification.

The Earl of Cairngræme, a very narrow shouldered, narrow minded man, whose physical and moral qualifications were cast in the meanest mould of mortal nature, had been occupied for

sixty-five years with the effort of striving to reflect on himself the lustre of his earldom, and to dignify his earldom with the greatness of his personal importance. In his own subservient circle, he was apt to refer to the houses of Hapsburg and Guelph as mere mushrooms of the middle ages, and to speak of majesty itself in a tone of condescension and patronage; regarding the throne and constitution of the country as safe, so long as the clan of Ogylvie kept its place, maintained its dignity, and extended its connections. Although a fierce aristocrat, he was not by any means a blind advocate of aristocratization; had no objection to the commercial consignment of one member of his tribe to India, or the union of another with a Mr. Jonathan MacWinnepeg, by way of refreshing and re-invigorating those sources of importance with which the Ogylvies were somewhat scantily furnished. Provided they proved victorious in the end, it was indifferent to Lord Cairngraeme that his kinsmen *stooped* to conquer. He exacted only that each should severally display *some* triumphant pretension to public respect;—either

station, wealth, beauty, or talent. What his lordship chiefly hated, was the notion of a cypher in the family ; and no sooner did he learn the existence of a new Ogylvie, however collateral, than he was all eagerness to ascertain whether he, she, or it, were calculated in anyway to augment the family consequence ; and if not, to find out some method by which they could be redeemed from insignificance, and set to work in the Ogylvie factory.

It was therefore a real comfort to his feelings on entering his cousin Sir Colin's drawing-room, to ascertain that the protégée of Mrs. Mac (who although vulgar and obscure, possessed due importance in his eyes as the unshackled proprietress of fifty thousand pounds) was a perfectly presentable person ; handsome, agreeable, ladylike, and willing to be patronized. He saw too, with a single glance that she considered him a very great man ; which was a tolerable argument towards his considering *her* a very sensible woman.

“ I am happy to perceive,” said he, aside to his Countess, “ that this scion of the family is a

person it will be no degradation to us to bring forward. You must find an opportunity of announcing to her that we have no objection to make her acquaintance." And in exact conformity with these instructions (for the lady was a mere shadow or echo of the lord) Lady Cairngræme did actually take occasion to inform Mrs. Henry that, in consideration of her having a few drops of Ogylvie blood in her veins, it was the intention of their high mightinesses to raise her from the dust by their notice and protection.

It is seldom, indeed, that an union, whether in noble, gentle, or simple life, is so equally assorted as that which linked the tumid Earl to the empty Countess of Cairngræme. Her ladyship was a woman of the most frigid equanimity of mind and temperament ;—walked slow,—talked slow;—her actions were calm and deliberate, —her words measured and low-voiced. The world, mistaking the absence of human passion for the wisdom of self-government, pronounced her to be a most amiable woman ; and as her apathetic indifference toward men and things, secured her from

overt demonstrations of any kind, she made no enemies, provoked no misrepresentation, and glided through life with as much ease and dignity as a frigate sliding from the stocks. There was not a single prominent angle or feature on which cavillers could hang an objection:—her coldness was accounted moderation, her silence humility.

There exists, indeed, a certain sect of persons in society, for whom, in default of higher qualities, regularity replaces a multitude of virtues. The Cairngræmes, for instance, were a couple personally incapacitated to contribute either to the advantage or gratification of their fellow creatures. But it was the system of their house to execute all the minor duties of life with religious punctuality; to take their annual departure from Cairngræme House on the same day of the same month; and to re-commence their pilgrimage from Hill-street back to Scotland with the same exactness. Let parliament, Swing, or cholera, rule the hour and misgovern the times, *their* moments were regulated by the same patent chronometer, and their movements ad-

justed by the same calendar by which they had been measured for thirty years past. The payment of their bills, the distribution of their amusements, the admeasurement of their devotions, all was done and executed with the same sober and systematical decorum; and Lord and Lady Cairngræme were accordingly pronounced to be the most excellent people in the world. They were at least the most harmless;—and if incapable of rising to the nobler virtues of human nature, did as little mischief in their generation as the two leopards rampant that guarded their armorial escutcheon.

Mrs. Bentham had thus three several channels opened to her ambition, either of which would have singly answered her utmost aspirations. She perceived that the favour of Mrs. MacWinnepeg might lead to fortune; the notice of Sir Colin and Lady Ogylvie to fashion; the patronage of Lord and Lady Cairngræme to distinction. But the worldliness of the fair Oriental was of no common order. With her, an object to be compassed was a source of real

enjoyment; and the extent and variety of manœuvres promised by her plan of uniting in a single point her designs upon her three relatives, caused her very heart to thrill with anticipation. She knew that Mrs. Mac was as techy as a Turk; Lady Ogylvie, jealous of the partialities of her wealthy kinswoman as of those of a lover; and Lord Cairngraeme, from the summit of his high Olympus, sovereignly tenacious of the unlimited devotion of his worshippers. A less enterprising spirit might perhaps have shrunk from the task of propitiating even *one* of these three humoursome, wayward divinities. But Mrs. Bentham, in the fulness of her joy, could not be sufficiently thankful for such an opportunity of plotting, caballing, cajoling, smiling, smoothing, and deluding. The quarry to be hunted down was almost a secondary consideration to so staunch a sportsman; but still the prospect of achieving independence,—of visiting Mrs. Gregory in a showy equipage of her own, and oppressing her with details of the fashionable world, upon which she had managed to engraft herself,—were not without their attrac-

tion. Like a prudent general, meanwhile, she resolved to make her attack on the two extremities of the line (Mrs. Mac and the Earl), nothing doubting but that the centre (the Ogylvies) who were busily employed in paying their court to both, would surrender at discretion.

Now between the Thane of Cairngræme and Mrs. Mac there existed a natural antipathy. It required all the force of his Ogylvian predilections, and sense of the duty of keeping on good terms with any member of his family enjoying the respectability of two thousand per annum, to overcome his Lordship's horror of her undauntable audacity—her loud volubility—her red face—her rotund outline. The Earl himself,—tall, spare, sallow,—drony in his enunciation, and measured in his movements,—held as flagrant enormities the moral and physical activity of Jonathan Mac Winnepeg's widow. It was amazing to Lord Cairngræme how any person, not an Ogylvie, could endure either the sight or sound of her; while Mrs. Mac, in her conferences with her familiars (and the distinction was neither rare nor difficult of

attainment), was apt to declare, that had not that prig of a body Lord Cairngræme been an Earl, he would have found it difficult to earn a meal by his wits, or a friend to share it with by his virtues. The Countess, moreover, was scarcely admitted by the old lady to the distinctions of a sentient entity.

Hitherto the two cousins had found a common ear into which to pour the secret of their mutual contempt, gracing the fair head of Lady Ogylvie. Sir Colin, indeed, was too statesman-like to lay himself open to the charge of being an accessory to the fact, by even listening to their mutual abuse ; but his wife had fanned the flame by incessantly complaining to Mrs. Mac of the Earl's stiffnecked prejudices and shallow egotism ; and to the Earl, of Mrs. Mac's vulgar virulence of tongue, and unreasonable prejudices against himself and the Countess. But the new General commenced an entirely new system of tactics :—on her very first visit to the Cairngræmes, she took occasion to hint the reverence with which her aunt had inspired her for the head of the house of Ogylvie,

as the most distinguished subject in the realm ;— and on the following day, walked in her most submissive-looking gown and bonnet to Gower-street, to assure Mrs. Mac that nothing but the strong family affection and respect professed towards herself by Lord and Lady C.—had induced *her* to profit by their overtures of acquaintance.

“ Lord Cairngræme was saying to me, my dear madam, the other day, at that dinner to which you were so good as to take me in Portman-square, that there was not a person in the metropolis, — in the very kingdom, — whose opinion he preferred to your own on any point not purely professional. Politics for instance !—Lord Cairngræme declares that if there were only half a dozen heads like yours in the House of Lords— ”

“ Ay ay !—Cairngræme knows well enough that is no discovery of his ! His lordship is as well aware as I am, that Charles Fox, Whitbread, and Ponsonby, and half a dozen other eminent men of that day, used always to say to my poor dear Mr. Mac Winnepeg, ‘ Mac, my

fine fellow,' they used to say, 'Why don't you get that wife of yours into Parliament? By Jove, she has more jaw and more judgment than all of us put together !' "

"He certainly hinted that his opinion on the subject was backed by those of several very distinguished individuals:—and Lady Cairngraeme immediately observed—"

"Pho ! don't tell me what that poor parrot of a creature observed ;—a woman as devoid of mind and energy as a leather doll !"—

"*That*, I conclude, is the reason of her ladyship's looking up to *your* activity of mind with so much veneration."

"Poor thing ! I believe after all she is an inoffensive well-meaning fool."

"She has at least the sense to be conscious of her deficiency, and to keep in the background ; and it is really lamentable to observe how her weakness is practised upon by——but I beg your pardon,—I forgot I was speaking to one of the family."

"Well, my dear ma'am—and if you *are* speaking to one of the family—you don't sup-

pose that I am sufficiently interested in them or their proceedings, to make it dangerous for a daughter of my brother the kernel to speak her mind concerning them?—Master Benson, my love, come off that rug; you wear away all the fringe by fidgeting the corner in with your foot.—Pray, ma'am, speak out.”—

“I was indiscreet to allude to the subject; but you, who are so observant and so penetrating, cannot fail to have noticed that Lady Ogylvie (a very sweet creature she is,—and I should be vexed to say a word against her) makes a complete prey of poor dear Lady Cairngræme, by the influence of her barefaced flatteries to the Earl.”

“Umph!—I never perceived any remarkable civilities on the part of my cousins in Portman-square towards that man and woman in buckram.”

“I dare say not, my dearest madam.—(Henry, my darling, did you not hear Mrs. Mac Winnipeg speak to you?—Go and sit on that little stool, and touch nothing while you are in the room.)—Lady Ogylvie is too much in awe of

your discernment to fasten herself as she does on Lady Cairngræme in *your* presence. But to my certain knowledge, half a dozen notes pass every morning between Portman-square and Hill-street ; and by persuading the Earl that she and Sir Colin are completely at his beck, she manages to hold both Lord and Lady Cairngræme in leading strings. His lordship fancies the Ogylvies do a great deal in upholding the family consequence in the eye of the world ; and consequently his interest with the administration, —his church preferments, his opera box, his—— May I venture to inquire, my dear madam, whether you did not yourself solicit, and without success, from Lord Cairngræme last year, a presentation to—”

“ The Wimpole Charity for decayed Schoolmasters ?—I did, ma’am, I did ; but his lordship my kinsman’s interest was already engaged.”

“ Not already—but readily ; for Sir Colin Ogylvie no sooner discovered that *you* had a protégé among the candidates, than he secured Lord Cairngræme’s interest for his butler’s brother.”

“I don’t believe a word of it!”—cried Mrs. Mac Winnepeg, inflating into the shape of one of Sadler’s balloons; “Lady Ogylvie knew very well that the poor man for whom I was interesting myself, had been private tutor to the late Mr. Mac Winnepeg, and that I was moving heaven and earth to bring him in.”

“The successful pretendant, if you remember, was named David Dunstan,” said Mrs. Henry mildly, “and you must surely have heard Sir Colin call the maitre d’hôtel at Portman-square, by the same name?—However, it is only very natural that Sir Colin should exert himself to confer some little obligation on his domestics; for when people go on year after year promising to pay,—instead of paying their servants’ wages,—they—”

“I don’t believe a word of it!”—interrupted Mrs. Mac Winnepeg, scorning the enjoyment of a bit of domestic scandal which she had not herself ferreted out.

“Surely, my dearest madam, you must have observed the flippant manner in which our lovely friend is addressed by that very fine lady of a lady’s maid of hers;—that individual whose cap

you pointed out to me as trimmed with rich Mechlin lace?—For my part, I am so little versed in such matters, that I fancied the creature had made herself smart with some of Ur-ling's trumpery; but your quick eye soon discerned the difference. We all know, that when ladies are unable to acquit themselves of their *just* obligations to their servants, they are compelled to keep the peace by the occasional sacrifice of a piece of finery, such as they must be well aware—”

“I don't believe a word of it!” again ejaculated Mrs. Mac,—cutting short the moralities of the case, for which she cared not a straw in any one's mouth but her own.

“And then that impertinent nurse, who presumed to laugh in your face, the other day, when you suggested the Canadian liniment for strengthening little Colin Ogylvie's distorted spine!”—

“And so she did!”—cried Mrs. Mac, in the earnest accent of Kean's Othello.

“The fact is, my dear madam, I should be the last person to make a remark on the conduct

and character of any person bearing the name of my late father, but that I consider it a derogation to the family that the Ogylvies and their embarrassed circumstances should afford an universal topic for animadversion ; while Lord Cairngræme, by his excessive partiality, is supposed to countenance their proceedings. I own it hurts my feelings to hear the Ogylvies spoken of with disrespect in every shop I enter ; and spoken to by their domestics in a tone so different from that employed towards yourself by that excellent creature Larkins and your maid Pumpkinson. I must admit, however, that *they* are servants not to be met with every day in times like these."

" And who made them what you see them, I should like to know ?"—cried Mrs. Mac, her countenance relaxing at this allusion to her favourite theme. " I have no objection to tell you, ma'am, what I have told to many others, that Larkins came to me a raw red-headed cowboy ; and that the first thing the late Mr. Mac Winnepeg did when he entered our establishment, was to knock him down for dipping his

dirty fingers into the silver cream ewer to catch a fly. From a fustian jacket the creature grew into a footboy's coatee; till, at length, ma'am, his jacket was prolonged into a tail coat. But as I often observe to Larkins to this very day, what would have been the use of a tail coat, if I had not at the same time taught him to clean plate, deliver a message, and stand behind the carriage?—The truth is, I saw the making of a good servant in Jack Larkins, and a good servant I determined to make him, or know why. For, as the late Commander-in-chief used to say to the late Mr. Mac Winnepeg, ‘Mac, my fine fellow,’ his Royal Highness used to say, ‘why don’t you get that wife of yours into the service?—Faith, she would do more for us as a drill-serjeant than it would be in my power to repay.’ No—no! my dear niece, Larkins may be a tolerable butler now, and I don’t deny it, but he may thank me for all he knows; and if I *did* help him to set up his son in a smart shop in Regent-street last year, God knows it was not that I felt I had any obligation to *him* for his services.”

“ It will be a long time I fear,” sighed Mrs. Henry, “ before the poor Ogylvies are enabled to reward an old servant of theirs with such distinguished liberality; which is the reason, I suppose, they are so rapacious of the patronage of Lord Cairngræme. But I must now wish you good morning; I have a long walk before me;—and ”

“ No—no !—ma’am, I can do myself the pleasure of setting you down without any particular inconvenience.”

“ By no means: I must guard against the acquirement of habits of luxury for *my* children. Little Henry must learn to walk, or he will never deserve to ride. Eh ! Henry?—was not that the lesson Mrs. Mac Winnepeg was so kind as to teach you the other day when you complained of being tired?—But since you are so very kind, my dear madam, as to offer me your services, if you happen to go near Grafton House, will you procure me three skeins of lilac sewing silk? So much imposition is going on at the fashionable shops at our end of the town, that I really seldom trust

myself to enter them. Will you pardon my troubling you with this sixpenny commission?"

"Guineas are made up of sixpences, as poor Richard says," was Mrs. Mac Winnepeg's reply; coaxed back into good humour by the prospect of being busy and useful at no expense to herself or trouble to her horses; and she hastened to Flint's on her thrifty errand, while Mrs. Henry made her way home slyly in a hackney coach, to be in time for Lady Ogylvie, who had promised to call and take her to Howell and James's. She had no fear of betraying her duplicity by a chance encounter with Mrs. Mac Winnepeg in any such quarter.

CHAPTER V.

O ye douce folk, who live by rule,
Grave, tideless-blooded, calm and cool,
Your hearts are just a standing pool,
Your lives, a dyke. BURNS.

A MAN encased in the cold and unapproachable self-conceit which characterised the Earl of Cairngraeme, is predestined to become a dupe. The adulation of mankind appearing no more than his just due, it never for a moment occurred to his lordship to mistrust the devoted homage with which his fair relation from India sat listening to hear his nothings monstered; or the lady-of-the-bed-chamber air of deference with which she watched the solemn movements of his stately countess. He saw in her only a woman of high principles and low fortunes, for whom it was his duty to

seek a suitable establishment ; and was persuaded that a widow possessed of five-and-thirty years, and only one thousand per annum, ought to rank as endowed with an income of three thousand pounds and an incumbrance of only five-and-twenty years, in consideration of being by the grace of God an Ogylvie and his lordship's kinswoman. It was the first project that had entered his leaden head for some time ; and Lord Cairngraeme was disturbed in his rest for several consecutive nights, by the task of turning and returning in his mind from whom among all his friends and acquaintances, the tribe of Ogylvie would derive most aggrandizement, by means of an alliance with the daughter of the late distinguished Colonel Ogylvie of Futtigherry.

He was not hopeless (during the excitement of the first four-and-twenty hours of deliberation) of beholding the turban and bird of paradise feather exchanged for a coronet. He was acquainted with several gouty old lords, to either of whom the handsome widow would form an invaluable wife ; and the first morning visit he paid in Portman-square after the con-

ception of his plan, his lordship actually twisted his grim features into an expression more nearly resembling waggery than Lady Ogylvie had conceived to be within their reach, in confiding to her the glorious campaign he had chalked out for the left wing of the family. Mrs. Henry herself would have been scarcely more amazed to learn that the Magog Earl, so great in her conceit and his own, was bent on marrying her to a lord, than was the dainty lady-proprietess of the labyrinth of Sèvres-tables and buhl cabinets, on whom he had fixed for his confidante!—But although startled, Lady Ogylvie was by no means so inclined to oppose the elevation of a woman whom she disliked and despised, as might have been inferred from the heartless egotism of her disposition. She was too eager to get Mrs. Henry out of her way, to care much whether so desirable a measure were effected by a decided rise or decided fall. Ever since her unexpected debut on the London boards, Mrs. Mac Winnepeg had been so cunningly cruel in inflicting her on all occasions upon Lady Ogylvie when

she was out of humour, as “my niece from Indy,” by way of holding out a menace of disinheritance to little Clara, that her ladyship was no less eager than Lord Cairngraeme to have her so advantageously settled in life as to leave no pretext for pathos touching, “my poor brother the kernel’s widowed daughter who is so slenderly provided for!” After the first few moments of irritation at the notion of seeing the poor relation in Mortimer-street obtain precedency over herself, self-interest suggested to Lady O. that she might be a considerable gainer by the loss. Moreover, although by nature almost as artful as Mrs. Bentham herself, her genius for cabal had not been half so much cultivated by collision with the harsh necessities of life. Her mercenary views were generated only by the wantonness of prodigality,—while those of the widow arose from the exigencies of a narrow income; and while the daughter of the Commandant of Fuddygherry had no single object or diversion in life to contend with the one grand design of obtaining Mrs. Mac Winnepeg’s for-

tunes and Lord Cairngræme's favour, the fine lady of Portman-square had her balls, parties, and dinner-parties—her rides in the Park, her flirtations, her new capote and old point to divide her attention.

“And pray, my dear lord, may I inquire to what happy man you have allotted the hand of our charming relative?” she inquired of the Earl, in the most fustian phrase she could command. “Before you say a word more on the subject, however, I venture to pronounce her a very fortunate woman; for I am only too well aware of the severity of principle and shrewdness of foresight which characterise your notions respecting the eligibilities of the marriage state.”

“Why—a—yes—a—It is not every man on whom I could wish to confer the privilege of matching into the Ogylvie family; and really Mrs. Bentham is so estimable a woman, and—a—by candlelight a so—very handsome a woman, that I shall think my friend Lord Dotterel a lucky man, should he succeed in gaining her affections.”

“Dotterel?” exclaimed the lady, startled into her natural train of feeling. “That tiresome old creature, who talks of nothing but ‘my seat in Sussex’—and has devoted his last half-century to improving the breed of his game and venison,—the construction of his forcing-houses and fish-ponds,—his ovens and hot plates; who enters the House once a year to give his vote in favour of a Brighton railroad, to secure him a live turbot, or a —”

“*I* allude to Lord Dotterel of Dotterel Park, whom your ladyship may or must have met at my dinner-table,” said Lord Cairngraeme drily. “Of his lordship’s predilection for the superiority of his own, I know nothing; conceiving that, from the moment *I* distinguish an individual with *my* notice, it is no longer time to dwell on any deteriorating peculiarities of his character.”

“A most excellent choice!” cried Lady Ogylvie, for a moment subdued by the dignity of her lordly kinsman’s reproof. “Doubtless Mrs. Bentham, who in India had an opportunity of presiding over a large establishment, will

be the very person to do justice to *his*, and to contribute to the comfort of his declining years."

"Declining years?—Dear madam, you must be dreaming!" exclaimed Lord Cairngraeme, trying to catch a glimpse of his own puckered Denner-like visage in one of the splendid mirrors ornamenting the apartment. "Dotterel is, comparatively speaking, a young man. He came to his title, I remember, at the time of the Duke of York's expedition, and was then a mere boy; not more than three or four and thirty. At this very time, Dotterel cannot be more than sixty-eight, or so. Declining years!—my dear Lady Ogylvie, let me entreat that you will not talk in that heedless way, on the subject, before Mrs. Bentham. It is impossible to say what absurd prejudice you might excite in her mind!"

"I dare say I have mistaken Lord Dotterel for some other person," cried Lady Ogylvie, anxious to escape a second reprimand, and enchanted to find at how dear a rate Mrs. Bentham would be made to purchase her accession

to the peerage. “And pray when will the match take place?”—

“Take place?”—ejaculated Lord Cairngraeme, aghast at the undignified vivacity of Lady Ogylvie’s conclusions. “Is it to be supposed that the marriage of a man of my friend Dotterel’s importance can be hurried on like the match of some low-bred country squire?—No! my dear Lady Ogylvie, a moment’s consideration will suffice to prove to you that time is required for the adjustment of so weighty an affair; and besides, to own the truth, the project at present is exclusively of my own devising, and I have not so much as suggested it to the two persons principally concerned.”

“Indeed!” said Lady Ogylvie, not daring to show how much she was amused at the more than Escurial-like pomposity of the head of the family; “I ought to be infinitely grateful for the confidence you have evinced in my discretion, by entrusting me with the secret.”

“I am now on my way to break the ice to my friend Mrs. Henry. But I have no reason to

believe she will show herself implacable to my friend, or evince an unbecoming want of deference to any counsel of mine.”—

Meanwhile Mrs. Bentham, with all her love of lords and lordliness, all her submission to the ukases of the Hill-street autocrat, all her eagerness to get free from the vile trammels of her vidual insignificance, was not the more passive in the hands of her noble kinsman from offering no overt opposition to his plans. She had cogent reasons of her own for seeking fortune elsewhere. From the period of her familiar admission into the family, she had been in the habit of meeting, at the tables of Lord Cairngræme and Sir Colin Ogylvie, a certain Sir Richard Bayntun; a man of a certain age, with a certain standing in society, and a certain air of fashion, only too well calculated to dazzle the imagination of a woman whose days had melted away under a Pun-kah. Thanks to a coat of George the Fourthian fit and cut,—to a wig of the most artful artificiality,—and an extensive commerce with the Bond-street Civet cat,—it required a more dis-

cerning eye than the widow's, to fix a date to this very choice specimen of mature dandyism ; and as he was secure from the inquisition of the Baronetage, (a mere knight of the Dragon and the Sun, or some other barbaric order acquired while touring among Sultans and Pachas in some part of the eighteenth century,) not a soul in London was able to say more of Sir Richard than that he was a very good-looking and young-looking man. No one was better accepted in society ; no one lived on better terms with all the best houses at the West-end ; and no one was gifted with such imperturbable good humour—such a ready flow of spirits :—no one knew every thing about every body so well as Sir Richard Bayntun ; and no one, either through calculation or principle, said so little that was unsatisfactory of foe or friend. As it was his cue to carve out for himself an agreeable existence, and to multiply rather than select his dining and country-visiting houses, he was wise enough to eschew the reputation of a *bel esprit*, which necessitates so many spiteful sayings and perilous doings ; and to rest contented with the

minor renown of being *au courant du jour*—an accurate echo of fashionable gossip,—not to be put out of spirits by an encounter with a dull party, or out of humour by a bad dinner. A mere wit is by no means a person to be relied on for the enlivenment of a circle; while a man like Bayntun, possessed only of good animal courage, and a cheerful temperament, is an acceptable companion to all the world.

To two dull persons like the Cairngræmes, such a friend was invaluable. His voluble animation was a screen to their cold taciturnity; his popular currency supplied the vacuum created by their exclusivism,—an exclusivism not the less rigid from being wholly distinct from that of fashion. He was always ready to eat their dinners and drink their claret when good, and to praise them when bad;—to set on foot inquiries on points where they desired information,—to appear interested in the dull vicissitudes of their monotonous existence,—to talk politics with the favourite cousin Sir Colin,—and, in process of time, to talk sentiment with the favourite cousin Mrs. Bentham.

The accession of this last-named personage to the familiar circle of the Cairngræmes, was in fact a considerable relief to a person so much in the habit of gracing their dinner-table as Sir Richard Bayntun. Lady Ogylvie was herself too young, fair, and fashionable, to be imposed upon by *his* airs of youth and fashion. Mrs. Mac Winnepeg he regarded as a sort of wild Indian squaw, brandishing her tomahawk against all civilized individuals without regard to the decencies of society ; but when the handsome woman, in the turban and bird of paradise feather,—urbane, chatty, and tolerably well bred,—made her appearance in the Ogylvie menagerie, he certainly found the task of helping the Countess's turbot or salmon far less tiresome than before. To have met her at the Gregorian villa at Edmonton, or indeed in almost any other mansion of the metropolis, might have considerably altered his view of her attractions. But Lord Cairngræme's line of policy having suggested that any person presented by himself to the world, as a member of his own family,—of *the* family,—the mighty tribe of Ogylvie,—must

be put forward under flying colours,—Mrs. Bentham was introduced in the Hill-street coterie as “my amiable relative from India,” and descanted upon, during her absence, as “a very charming creature, daughter of the late distinguished Colonel Ogylvie of Futtigherry, and widow of the late eminent Judge Bentham of Ghaucapore.” As there was no one to contradict the distinction or eminence of either party by a statement of their personal and official insignificancy, Mrs. Bentham soon passed current as a rich widow of high connexions. Her diamond ear-rings, and set of turquoises, said wonders in her favour.

Such was the man in whom Lord Dotterel was destined to find a rival; such the woman in whom Sir Richard Bayntun was likely to find a lady of the Dragon and the Sun.

CHAPTER VI.

On peut être plus fin qu'un autre : mais pas que tous les autres. ROCHEFOUCAULT.

“ I can’t think, my dear ma’am,” cried Mrs. Mac Winnepeg to Mrs. Bentham, whom she thought proper to drag one morning from Mortimer-street to Blackwall, under pretence of an airing, but in reality to look for bargains of shaddocks, guava-jelly, and averdivats — “ I really can’t possibly imagine what those foolish people, the Cairngræmes, mean by inviting you, — day after day and week after week, — to meet that pudding-headed and pudding-shaped old numskull, Lord Dotterel ; — a man who has been living with his housekeeper till he is scarcely fit for the society of females of refinement ! I take it vastly ill of Lady Ogylvie that she took the

liberty of placing him next *me* at dinner the other day."

"I am surprised she should have done so, knowing your antipathy to him. But poor Lady O. has no leisure to think of any thing but her own rings and ringlets."

"If you'll believe me, ma'am, the man actually had his plate changed seventeen times; and made up the sauce for his turbot of as many ingredients as an apothecary's apprentice mixing a fever draught. I protest he made me sick at heart."

"Lord Dotterel seems a favourite with the Cairngræmes?"

"Of course; his head is as empty, and his stomach as craving as their own. They sit together, talking of bills of fare and new dishes, with their mouths watering just like so many hounds round the boiler in a kennel kitchen. Idleness, ma'am, is the parent of gluttony,—which brutalizes mind and body, and ruins an estate. I would undertake to educate a China pig, to make just as useful and intellectual a member of society, as my Lord Dotterel. A

pretty specimen of a legislator !—It is enough to turn one Radical to see the creature at feed ;—his eyes glistening, and his lips quivering !”

“ Why dear, dear madam, pray take pity on *me*, if not on him !—Remember I shall probably meet him at dinner to-day ; and you cannot expect me to look at him, and keep my countenance, after listening to your humourous sketch.”

“ Your countenance ?—I’m much mistaken, if my Lord Cairngraeme thinks you will be able to keep your heart. It strikes me that he has taken it into his head to make a match between you.”

“ Impossible ! In my situation,—two children scantily provided for,—a victim to a hot climate ! No, my dear Mrs. Mac Winnepeg, you must be aware that such a thing is wholly out of the question.”

“ I tell you I am sure of it. And when they have prevailed upon the silly old goose to be of opinion that a wife would keep him a better table than a housekeeper, he will make his pro-

posals, like a fool as he is ; and you will accept them—”

“ Like a fool as I am ?—At least, not without referring myself to your advice.”

“ Oh, ma’am !—my advice is of very little value. I say, live respectably on a respectable competence, without being either a finesser or a dupe. But ask Lady Ogylvie, who is a fine lady, —ask Lady Cairngraeme, who is a *great* lady ;—don’t ask an old insignificant Yankee merchant’s widow. What should *she* know about lordships and ladyships,—or care about them either ?”

“ I trust the sister of my late father would not withhold her valuable counsel from me at such a crisis !” cried Mrs. Bentham, trying to look solemn, and hoping for an opportunity of affecting to reject Lord Dotterel in compliment to Mrs. Mac Winnepeg’s antipathy. “ Rely upon it, madam, I have too implicit a confidence in *your* knowledge of the world, to prefer the advice of any other person on a point of so much moment.”

“ And then there’s that tailorized fine figure of a man, who sponges on the Cairngraemes,”

observed Mrs. Mac Winnepeg, watching the countenance of her niece; but her niece was just then sedulously watching the countenance of the Duke of Wellington, as it frowned over the door of a Whitechapel ale-house. “What is the man’s name, my dear?”—

“Do you mean Sir Richard Bayntun?”

“Ay, ay! Sir Richard Bayntun; Lady Ogylvie tells me he gives excellent dinners.—Eh?”

“I never dined with him.”

“And that he has a handsome country seat somewhere near Cheltenham?”—

“I never was there.”

“He plays the best game at whist of any one I ever played against, since poor Mac Winnepeg’s time?”—

“I never played with him.”

“He seems a chatty conversible man?”

“I never converse with him except on the general topics of the dinner table.”

“Humph!” thought Mrs. Mac,—as she deposited the widow in Mortimer-street. “It is as I thought. She would not have taken such

care to conceal her face and her opinion, if she had not some particular interest in the subject. Perhaps my niece may find out, some day or other, that it would have been as well to take me into her confidence."

Mrs. Bentham, however, took no one into her confidence. Experience had already taught her, that whenever an affair, whether important or unimportant, comes to be discussed by the scattered members of a family who have more leisure than wit, it is turned over and over, inside and out, round and round, till, like some shop-worn article on a haberdasher's counter, all its defects and deficiencies become disagreeably apparent. She had taken private cognitions which satisfied her mind that even had she been inclined to second the projects of Lord Cairngraeme, insurmountable obstacles existed to her union with Lord Dotterel; and she had formed, on premises equally valid, a notion that the bird of paradise feather had not been ineffective on the well-padded breast of Sir Richard; that not all the wadding with which his heart was guarded by the aid of Berg-

holt or Nugee, had been efficient to ward off the arrows of Cupid!—Yet not one word did she breathe to Lord Cairngræme, not a syllable did she reply to Lady Ogylvie, when the one suggested his desire that she should be promoted into Lady Dotterel, or the other strongly advised her to content herself with becoming Lady Bayntun. She was resolved that neither of the two family gossips should be enabled to give authenticity to the rumours of society by “thus said the widow,”—“thus hath the widow implied!”—making her concerns the town talk, and justifying the flagitious inquiry, “and pray, if it were to come to any thing, what would they be able to make up between them?”—“How are the poor dear children provided for?”—“Has the widow a pension from the East India Company?”—“Are those people at Edmonton likely to do any thing for the little Benthams?” &c. &c. &c. Against the incurrence of all such perils Mrs. Bentham was forewarned.

Active as an armadillo, but like that rapid quadruped entrenched in an armour of mail,

her feelings were intangible, her movements, not to be forestalled. Born among slaves and heathens,—educated with a view to the subjugation of some soulless taskmaster of slaves and heathens,—not a particle of christianly or womanly feeling had been fostered in her heart. It mattered not whether a second marriage would import the interests of her children:—all she cared was to achieve for her selfish self a more luxurious position in the world. Without vice or criminality, according to the canons of human or divine law, she presented that fearful object, — an immortal being chained to the sensualities and emptinesses of conventional life,—heartless, Godless, virtueless;—rejecting all feeling of gratitude for gifts bestowed,—despising the ample means of happiness and usefulness within her reach, she became (and there are many such) a worshipper of shadows. Was it not fitting she should be taught, in many a bitter lesson, that MAMMON,—her sole deity,—is, after all, a mocking and unclean spirit?—

Meanwhile had not the empty tribe by which

this ancient pair of turtle doves were surrounded, been absorbed by theirs everal vanities,—Lord Cairngræme by his personal importance,—Lady Cairngræme by her superior decorum,—Mrs. Mac by her pride of purse,—Sir Colin by his imaginary political influence, and his lady by the glory of her egg-shell tea-cups and Chantilly mantilla, they could not but have observed that Sir Richard was assuming as many Lovelace-like airs as his gout would admit,—and that Mrs. Bentham listened to his whispers with a blush as ingenuous as vegetable bloom could supply : both were melting away before their eyes with the slippery chilliness of ice. Both were bent on the same line of policy. Each was eager to entangle the other without a previous scrutiny into their own ways and means. Sir Richard wanted to be taken for granted as a man of fortune ; Mrs. Bentham trusted that Lord Cairngræme's vague sketches of her prosperity would answer her purpose. *She* was incessantly striving to make the gallant knight commit himself ; and *he* always cross-questioning, with a view to elicit the exact

amount of her income. Each was persuaded that the other was a godsend and a dupe;—and their mutual manœuvres, were severally performed with the exactitude of partners in a minuet.

“Mrs. Bentham’s handsome fortune,” mused Sir Richard, “will enable me to take a lease of that cottage near Cheltenham I occupied last year, and keep a hunter or two into the bargain.”

“Sir Richard’s family-place in Gloucestershire,” thought the widow, “will supersede all expenses of house-rent.”

“People from India are generally pretty liberal,” said the lover to himself.

“People who live in the first society,” whispered Mrs. B. to Mrs. B. “have no time to think of petty economies.”

“I will wait,” thought he, “till I can exactly ascertain the nature of her property.”

“I ought to find out,” thought she, “whether it is in his power to make a settlement on his estate.”

“It will be very easy to go on in our present

shill-I-shall-I way, till I have inquired what pledge Mrs. Mac Winnepeg will give of her intentions."

"It will be safer to avoid affording decided encouragement till I have heard an authentic quotation of the Bayntun rentroll."

And thus, they went on sighing and smiling,—speaking small, and looking insinuating. Both boasted loudly of independence,—loudly of disinterestedness; and whispering as if by involuntary sympathy, that "ingenuousness of nature had rendered them dupes through life to the arts and artifices of other people."

In the midst of this inconclusive diplomacy, Sir Richard's watchful ear was startled one night at his club at Charing-cross, by whispers that "poor Colin Ogylvie was cleaned out,—done up; and that his place on the Treasury bench alone secured him from a place in that of the King's!——" He trembled!—Who could say to what base uses Mrs. Mac Winnepeg's property might come at last, in redemption of the family honour, unless things were brought to the immediate crisis of a marriage settlement?—

Not even Mrs. Bentham herself could have penned a more exquisite specimen of inexplicit rigmarole than that which Sir Richard, instantly seating himself in the *beau* window facing the lustrous warehouse of Hancock, indited in explanation of his hopes and fears,—his views and projects. He alluded to nothing but the rapture of calling her his; and in appealing to her personal tenderness, seemed to forget that a Leadenhall or a Threadneedle-street existed in our polite metropolis.—His propositions were as vague and as wide of the purpose as the clauses of a new bill in Parliament!

“I don’t half like this!” cried Mrs. B.;—examining the document with the scrutinizing eye of a lawyer searching out flaws in a deed. “Three pages of mere phrases, without one figure or cypher from first to last!—I detest fustian attempts at eloquence.—A dry but accurate estimate is to me far more acceptable. I will answer him in the same Pythonic style. A few fine sentiments and hard words wrap up an intention, whether in politics or courtship.”

She was actually in process of composing her oracular response, when the Edmonton carriage made its appearance at her door ; no longer conveying either the bustling mother or the snub-nosed progeny — but the tall, gaunt, uncompromising debtor and creditor person of Gregory himself. The visit was strictly confidential ;—the children were kept up in the nursery ;—and half an hour after their uncle's departure, Mrs. Bentham, with a flushed cheek and tremulous hand, delivered to her servant a thick letter bearing the superscription of “ Sir Richard Baynton.” She had scarcely time to put on her last new cap with pink ribands before, in reply to the dispatch, the comely figure of her friend was seated by her side on the sofa in Mortimer-street :—her cheek of a still deeper crimson, and her hand (the hand she had just promised to bestow upon him for life) more tremulous than ever. However interesting or interested the conference, it was terminated by the widow's declaration that she must lose not a moment in apprizing Mrs. MacWinnepeg of the approaching

change of her situation; and although Sir Richard (who was measuring the extent of the house and appraising its furniture, with an opinion that both were unworthy of a nabob's widow, and must give place to handsomer appointments) suggested that it would be quite sufficient to communicate the state of affairs to the head of her family, she persisted in dismissing him till they should meet again at dinner in Portman-square, in fulfilment of a previous engagement.

“It's *you*, is it, my dear ma'am?” cried Mrs. Mac Winnepeg, as she entered the front parlour in Gower-street, full of delicate emotions, and blushing unutterable things. “Why do you trouble yourself to come here this afternoon? You know I was to call for you, to take you to Sir Colin's. Did you fancy I should forget my engagement?—I never forget my engagements. But as you *are* here you may send your servant back to fetch your things to dress; and save me the trouble of going out of my way to take you up in Mortimer-street. I'm not

fond of the stones; and I shall now be able to go the best part of the way along the New-road. Just step into the hall and tell the man to bring your things in a bundle."

"Thank you, dear madam, I fear I must return home," said Mrs. Bentham, rejoicing in her heart that this state of vexatious dependence was about to end. "I am come to ask your advice on one of the most important events of my life. Sir Richard Bayntun has made me a proposal of marriage;—highly disinterested—respectable situation—permanent provision for my poor children—opinion of my friends—deference to your judgment—definitive reply."

"What is all this?" cried Mrs. Mac Winnipeg, who had never before heard her brother the kernel's daughter, mumble so incoherently; and taking off her spectacles, she determined Mrs. Bentham should speak explicitly and to the purpose. "Sir Richard Bayntun has proposed marriage to you, do you say?"

"He has."

"And it is your intention, ma'am, to accept him?"

“ My duty to my children compels me to sacrifice my reluctance to a second marriage.”

“ That is, you mean to have him ? ”—

“ I wish first, my dear madam, to ascertain your views on the subject.”

“ You want to know what I think of it ? ”—

Mrs. Bentham bowed gracefully.

“ I think you would make a fool of yourself; and that he has been making a fool of *you*.”

“ My dear, dear aunt, believe me nothing can have been more frank and candid than his conduct throughout,” cried Mrs. Bentham. “ He has never made the smallest inquiry into my pecuniary situation ! ”

“ Have you ever made any into *his* ? ”

“ It was unnecessary : —Lord Cairngraeme’s frequent commendations of his friend’s prudence, and Sir Richard’s handsome mode of living —”

“ Stuff !—The man has sunk his patrimony for an annuity; and spends it to the last shilling. I have it from Colin Ogylvie’s solicitor, who, knowing I have settled all my small

means on him, wanted me to redeem the annuity as a saving of ten per cent. to the family in Portman-square."

— Mrs. Mac Winnepeg's fortune settled on Sir Colin ;—and Sir Richard's sunk in annuities !
—Poor Mrs. Bentham !

"Most unaccountable ! Lady Ogylvie has always been advising me to encourage Sir Richard Bayntun's addresses !"

"Is she aware of the state of your own circumstances ?"—

"I did not think it necessary to entrust so frivolous a person with the state of my affairs."

"Ay—ay,—I dare say she fancied you tolerably well off ; and thinks that your union with that stuffed tiger Sir Richard, will enable him to put up with the irregular payment of his annuities. The Ogylvies are in a sad way !—between ourselves, I was obliged to make them a present of five hundred pounds this morning. Lord bless you, if all their fine furniture was to be sold, it would be a losing of fifty per cent. But I have consented to relieve them of one burthen.

Little Clara is to live with me, and take the name of Mac Winnepeg.”

“ His whole fortune sunk in annuities! ” ejaculated Mrs. Bentham, insensible to this new stroke.

“ Well, my dear,—you’ve only got to refuse him. You can marry old Dotterel, as I find you have been persuading the Cairngræmes you always intended to do.”

“ Lord Dotterel has five children by his house-keeper, to whom he has been privately married these two years.—I knew it from the first.”

“ But does that compel you to throw yourself away on that good-looking adventurer? ”—

“ Unfortunately I have already given him a written promise of marriage.”

“ After which, you came here, in the honesty of your heart, to ask my advice? ”—

“ I wished to break the matter to you by degrees.”

“ Better break it off without any degress at all.”

“ And provoke an action for breach of promise,

with heavy damages and public disgrace !” sighed Mrs. Henry.

“ In *your* place, I tell you what I’d do,” cried Mrs. Mac Winnepeg, eager to give advice when she had made up her mind to give nothing else. “ Call in your property from Indy, buy up the annuities, and you will double your joint income.”

“ Alas, alas ! ” exclaimed the widow. “ It was only this morning I received intelligence that my agents at Calcutta have stopped payment ; and that I have not a rupee left ! ”

“ Did you advert to that circumstance in forming your engagements with Sir Richard ? ”—

“ It would have been premature.”

“ Perhaps it may alter *his* views, and induce him to relinquish his claim ? ”—

“ And what will *then* become of *me* ? ”—

“ I have always understood from you, my dear ma’am, that the late Judge Bentham’s family were in very prosperous circumstances, and had nothing so much at heart as to keep you and your children entirely among them. For my part, you must perceive that, hampered as

I am with Colin Ogylvie's family, my mite would contribute little to your comfort."

"What *will* become of me!" cried the discomfited Mrs. Henry, the vision of her offended sister-in-law in the red velvet pelisse rising up in a menacing attitude before her.

"Why I don't see that you've a choice. You can't be worse off. A marriage with that tailor's block will at least afford you a maintenance."

"But perhaps, as you suggest," faltered the widow, "the change in my circumstances may produce a change in *his* intentions?"—

"Then bring an action for breach of promise against *him*."

"But you say, he has not a guinea?"

"Consult your dear friends, Lord and Lady Cairngræme. I find from Lady Ogylvie you consider them your protectors in the world. Sir Richard is their boon companion. Perhaps they will do something for him?"—

"Surely, madam, you must be sufficiently acquainted with Lord Cairngræme's character, to

know that he was civil to me only because I required nothing at his hands. The moment he finds me in a state of dependence, he will throw me off! ”

And so it proved!—It did not even suit Lord and Lady Cairngraeme that the routine of their life should be broken in upon by losing Sir Richard Bayntun as a bachelor dropper-in; but on discovering that the clan of Ogylvie was about to be disgraced by a public trial, exposing their amiable relative from India as quite a pauper and almost an adventurer, their indignation was beyond all bounds. At *their* instigation the matter was compromised;—the file and the viper agreed to economize by living together;—and sooner than sacrifice a sum of three or four thousand pounds which would exile him for ever from the *pavé* of London, the deluded bachelor gave his reluctant hand to the defrauded widow; and for many a year the coarse causticity of Mrs. Mac had an ample field in the menage of the pompous but parsimonious couple.

“ I dined with your Lordship’s relations the Bayntuns, yesterday,” said she to Lord Cairn-

græme, having managed to possess herself of his button at a meeting of the Horticultural Society. “‘Five nothings on five plates of delft!’ as Swift said of Stella’s supper.”

“Pray do not call them *my* relations,” said his Lordship stiffly.

“Your friends then. They *were* your intimate friends.”

“We usually find out the faults of our intimate friends.”—

“Sir Richard took in my niece in a disgraceful manner.”—

“You mean that Mrs. Bentham took in poor Sir Richard.”—

“After all, I fancy ’twas the biter bit. Both were acting as almost every body acts in the present day,—keeping up pretensions they had not means to justify. ’Tis the age of humbug!—Appearances are no where to be relied upon. Empty show and lies (not told but acted) are just now the order of the day.”

“It is very true, madam,” replied the Earl sententiously, and withdrawing himself in a dignified manner from her clutches. “In the pre-

sent disorganized state of society, one knows not where to pin one's faith. Things are not as they should be ! There are no longer any fixed principles to be relied on. Who on earth can calculate upon what he is to meet with in the world, when we find a regular club-and-carve-all bachelor making a speculation of matrimony ;— and are deceived into patronizing *poor relations* under the deceptive title of RELATIONS FROM INDIA !"—

THE INTRIGANTE.

It is the weaker sort of politicians that are the greatest
dissemblers.

BACON.

CHAPTER I.

Ambition, that high and glorious passion which makes such havoc among the sons of men, arises from a proud desire of honour and distinction ; but when the splendid trappings of which it is usually caparisoned are removed, it will be found to consist of the mean materials of envy, pride, and covetousness.

BURTON'S ANATOMIE OF MELANCHOLY.

VARIOUS as they are numerous, are the ways of rising in the world, for such as—neither “born great” nor likely “to have greatness thrust upon them,”—are eager to achieve it for themselves and their posterity. Ambition has always been permitted to rank among the grandiose and heroic passions ; and its integral quantities being weighed in a gigantic scale and appropriated to usurpers and conquerors, statesmen,

orators, artists and poets, we have all heard and repeated that

by that sin fell the angels,

till we forget the vast number of men and women—very mediocre men, and very insignificant woman,—to whom it has proved a stumbling block.

“Love of Fame” (phrenologists and modern philosophers define it more pithily) has been designated in certain well-turned verses much inflicted upon the memory of school-boys, to be *the* universal passion. But the shrine of ambition rarely proves deficient in votaries; and, linked as it is with the selfish indulgences of mortal nature, often commands a yet larger congregation. The ambitious lawyer sidling towards the woolsack,—the ambitious politician, dreaming of the treasury and its premiership,—the ambitious physician, looking forward to the presidency of his college,—the ambitious colonel of dragoons, fighting his way to a baton, through volumes of smoke and dust,—the ambitious author, scrawling *his*, through volumes of “sound and fury signifying nothing,”

— are in fact less actuated by lust of the empty distinctions of life, than by a regard for its loaves and fishes. *One* is perhaps, enamoured of a well-appointed equipage, and urges on his own industry by visions of chariots and horsemen, running footmen and outriders. Another is prone to sensual luxury, and his finest speeches are concocted with the *fumet* of a good dinner fragrant in his nostrils,—advocating the abolition of the slave trade till half the nation are in tears, only for love of a second course. A third man is covetous of a couple of yards of tabby ribbon,—red, blue, or green, according to his nation and language, calling or profession;—and perils his life or reputation with a view to their attainment. A fourth is fonder of the apostrophe of “my Lord,” than of the mere “Sir” implying nothing of right or title over the apostrophizer;—or his wife has a predilection for walking out of a room two feet in advance of her country neighbour Mrs. Thomson,—or his sons want to make their honourable way to Almack’s under cover of his new Peerage. A fifth,—but why enumerate when our present object is to dwell

upon the ambition of those to whom woolsacks and lawn sleeves are forbidden toys; of

A whole sex of queens,
Power all their aim, and pleasure all their means,
whose object is to rise and raise, by the exercise of personal influence;—of that brilliant crowd, in short, which furnishes the fashionable INTRIGANTES;—the Mrs. Mashams of May-fair—the Princesses des Ursins of St. James's!—

It would be difficult, perhaps, to point out a person in whose fashioning and fortunes nature ever more wantonly played her pranks than Anne Danby. The offspring of poor and vulgar parents, vulgar in mind as well as condition, our heroine beheld the light in a small curacy in Somersetshire; in a mean dirty lodging-house, rendered still meaner and still dirtier by two urchins of pupils, by whose “mental cultivation” her father eked out his scanty means of subsistence. The new and unwelcome incumbrance was laid aside in her yellow flannels, that she might interfere as little as possible with the pickling and preserving season, in the midst of which she made her appearance; and so little

of the poetry of life was mingled with the prose of Dynington, so thoroughly indifferent was the housewifely Mrs. Danby to the varnish of human nature, that she never troubled herself to examine whether the new-comer were as red-haired as Betsy her sister, or as squint-eyed as Sammy her brother. She was satisfied that the little creature “thruv prodigeously;” and as it roared but little to interfere with her culinary operations, pronounced it “a nice quiet babby.” She was too busy in darning the grey worsted stockings of the pupils, and brushing their woolly heads, to luxuriate in the sweet sensibilities of maternity.

What an advent for a heroine!—what a home for the development of that star and garter passion high AMBITION!

By the malice of the Fates or of her god-fathers and godmothers, Parson Danby’s second daughter was moreover christened Anne;—a very pretty name, when applied to the gentle Lady Anne, or the Queen of the Bluff Harry; but which, with a housewisely mother, and a father devoted to birch and Latin Grammar,

was sure to degenerate into Nancy. Nancy accordingly she became; and though ungraced by Betsy's flaming locks or Sammy's squint, the poor child grew up as ugly as Sin and as thin as Death. Her features were as prominent as those of the curate,—her complexion as coarse as that of his helpmate; her long straight black hair, which she was too careless to curl, and her mother too busy to sheer to christianlike proportions — resembled that of Mawworm; while her whole appearance,—wild, shaggy, untrimmed, half-shy, half-fierce,—resembled that of no human being, either in or out of the parish of Dynington. Till Nancy was sixteen, in short, she was a great, raw-boned, ugly, awkward girl, without one redeeming point of nature or art to give promise of future distinction.

There is no use in misleading mankind by the depiction of precocious heroes and heroines. Most girls are silly, most boys are stupid,—*all* disagreeable. We have very little doubt that the anecdotes which Brienne has been taxed to furnish concerning Napoleon's youth, are mere fabrications; and notwith-

standing the retrospective interest lavished upon Byron's boyhood, we have good reason to know that as a whelp he promised no better than others; and that at Harrow, the chief demonstration of his genius consisted in driving return post-chaises. Nancy Danby was remarkable for nothing beside her ugliness,—unless for a certain taciturnity which her mother called laziness, and her father sulkiness. Betsy had shot up into a stirring lass, able and willing to assist her frugal parents in the labours of scrubbing pupils and clarifying sugar;—and Sam was a thick heavy young man of considerable use to the pedagogue in his mathematical department;—but Nancy—Nancy, who fortunately remained the youngest of the needy family, had as yet given no sign of eminence either in the useful or ornamental departments. No one, indeed, noted her ungainliness or commented upon her deficiencies; she was not sufficiently interesting to any mortal breathing to be made the subject of observation.

How often has the step of man traversed in ignorance and indifference, a space of earth beneath whose blank surface the red gold was

lying dense and heavy in its clayey bed ;—how often has the beggar sat hungering on a spot where the treasures of the mine were sweltering in fruitless inaction !—Anne Danby, with all her cold reserve, her apparent torpor, held within her heart the germ of deep and powerful passion. She had ambition enough to have *made* a hero and marred a saint ; and untoward as were her prospects, and scanty her means and appliances of raising herself above their influence, she was already as sanguine in her hopes of personal distinction as Perrette while musing over her *pot-au-lait*. Nature had done little in her favour ; but she resolved to brave this niggardly distribution of her gifts and put the step-mother to shame, by her own miraculous art of gathering grapes from thorns and figs from thistles.

Whether this heroic determination were the cause of shaming her grudging benefactress into a kindlier mood, or whether the glowing spirit thus roused into energy had power to break the spell under which she had so long vegetated, certain it is that, on attaining her seventeenth

year, Anne Danby began to give promise of becoming a fine woman. Her long shaggy hair was now braided and twisted into shape, or twined in glossy bands around a magnificent forehead; an amendment that gave to view a pair of large dark oriental eyes, hitherto unheeded, and a line of countenance of the most impressive character. Determination lurked around the small compact mouth; and discrimination darted with every searching glance. The sallowness which blended so unbecomingly with her neglected attire and slouching gait, assumed the deep tone of one of Murillo's pictures, when mingling with the commanding contour of her fine features; and scarcely had Nancy, in her lonely walks in the greenwood, detected within herself the impulse of ambitious fervour by which her existence was animated, when the spark shone out in every look and movement. Without knowing why, the inhabitants of Dynington,—woolly-headed pupils and all,—confessed that she was an altered creature. Some said she was now “a fine-grown girl;” others thought that “with a little

teaching, she might be made as useful and as clever as Miss Betsy." In short, though few among the tribe were capable of discerning the energy of mind which brightened her fine countenance, while the progress of womanhood filled out the features and form uncongenial with the delicacy of extreme youth, they had, at least, wit to notice that she was expanding into a splendid woman; and that Berkley Murray (one of the former mat-headed pupils who, on his progress to Oxford, occasionally passed a day or two at Dynington,) was of a similar opinion.

At first, indeed, it was judged a remarkable thing, even by stupid Sam and Betsy the housewife, that a young gentleman who, as *Master* Murray, had rebelled so fiercely against the ways and means of the Tile House and fled so precipitately at the earliest possible moment of the holidays, should voluntarily and cheerfully return as *Mister* Murray,—ay! and even as the *Honourable* Mister Murray,—to swallow slices of the hard corned beef on which he had starved for three years of compulsion; and inhale the

fumes of brandy and water over which old Danby droned away his evenings by the smoky parlour fire. But Berkley put forth so plausible a pretext for his visits in the trout stream flowing through the water-meadows of Dynington, and appropriated so large a proportion of every twenty-four hours composing the several days of his visit, to the fishing-rod and fly-book of poor Samuel, that the Danbys, who were not persons of inquiring minds, were content to take his motives upon his own showing. He did not give much trouble:—for Mrs. Danby was no longer required to look to his chilblains and disentangle his flowing ringlets; and the extra-expenditure of a clean tablecloth and fresh bottle of currant wine *per diem*, were amply repaid by the venison, hares, and pine-apples dispatched from Farrington Castle on his arrival at home. The only member of the family indeed, to whom his sojourn at the Tile House was likely to prove inconvenient, was Nancy; who, being the least useful of her offspring, was duly and daily dispatched by the dominie's wife, to carry "Murray" his sand-

wiches, or “let Murray know that breakfast was waiting.” But it may be inferred, that the Honourable Berkley was a zealous disciple of the immortal Izaak; for instead of showing instant attention to so interesting a summons, the messenger and the angler seldom made their appearance for an hour or two afterwards. —It did not much signify. — The dominie’s habits were per force regular; and the family had long adopted a rule “never to wait for Murray.”

CHAPTER II.

I do fear the world
Hath tir'd you. You seek a cell to rest in,
As birds that wing it o'er the sea seek ships
Till they get breath, and then they fly away.

SHIRLEY.

LOVE is an erudite master of arts, and calls in all the sciences to the aid of his miracles. He is said to have made Cymon the dolt—a wit; he certainly made Anne Danby the fright—a beauty.

Every day, when she arrived at the Tile House on Murray's arm, panting beneath the weight of his basket (an interesting speculation to Mrs. Danby and Betsy), while *he* was engrossed by the care of his own and the curate's

multiform tackle, a richer colour streamed upon her cheek, and a brighter inspiration beamed from her eyes, like Miranda stooping under her load of logs. She said little more than heretofore, and that little was of too flighty a cast for the interpretation of the mother and daughter who were busy in weighing and crumbing the brightbarred perch for Murray's dinner. But her words fell sweetly on the ear of Berkeley, and deeply into his heart; and having long considered her as lovely as a Dryad, he now fancied her as gifted as a Muse, or rather as all the nine amalgamated into one bright wonder. Perhaps the sight of Sam Danby's canvas-covered Ovid, lying dusty on the shelf, suggested the classical illustration.

Certes, there can be found few more auspicious occasions for poeticizing, than the banks of a gurgling trout-stream, flashing a thousand sparkling dark-foiled diamonds in the sun of a midsummer day;—crested towards its precipitous banks by clusters of straggling water flowers,—the brook strawberry, the river hem-

lock, the forget-me-not, the aven, the yellow field flag; interspersed with patches of the harsh bulrush of scriptural association, or overhung by elder bushes, splashed with broad white pungent clusters of bloom. Here and there a thicket of maple and alder festooned over with briar and briony, the pale blossoms of the dog-rose, or the dark insidious buds and coral berries of the fatal nightshade, overshadows a pool whereon the little mayfly skims lighter than an infant's thought; while the sly linnet sits brooding silently over her nest in the leafiest shelter of the thicket, with a white shower of bramble-blossoms dropping, leaf by leaf, over her motionless head. Sometimes a bird, startled by the whisk of the angler's line over the pool, suddenly wings its way from among the lower branches, rippling the waters as it flies;—sometimes a gay dragon-fly, adorned like a knight of chivalry in steeled mail, hovers over the stream, as if for the fond vanity of reflecting its gaudy colours. The tufted meadows, on either side, send up their profuse herbage enamelled with a bright variety of summer blossoms; among

which the whirring of a thousand insect wings fills the air with drony music, broken by the cuckoo's mocking call and the harsh remonstrance of the corncraik. Such sounds have in fact a monotony more tranquillizing than even that of silence; and, save when the herd-boy's call at a distance intrudes a human sound into the scene, Solitude is there in her softest mood and sweetest aspect.

It was in much such a spot, and under the influence of balmy June with its blue skies and fleecy clouds, its breezes like the breath of love, its harmonious sounds, and dreamy visions—that Anne Danby sat by Murray's side on the grassy banks of the Dyne; now enwrap in the motionless silence indispensable to the success of his sport; now,—when some intervening thicket rendered that river-solitude still more lonely,—with an arm enlaced in his, listening to the sweet music of his professions, and replying with all the naïveté of first love. The relative position of the parties considered,—Murray being an Oxonian of one-and-twenty, and Miss Danby a village maiden of seventeen,—Murray being

son to the worldly-wise Earl of Farrington, and Miss Danby daughter to the book-learned dominie of Dynington,—it will perhaps be inferred by the experienced reader of novels and human nature, that Berkley was the serpent, and Nancy the Eve; that the Maudlen student was all art, and the maudlin miss all nature; that the Honourable Mister entertained dishonourable views, and that the fiery-haired Betsy's sister was a victim as predestinate as Clarissa Harlowe?—

By no means!—Berkley Murray was a fine spirited, warm hearted youth; who, like the majority of young gentlemen preparing for college at a private tutor's, had found it very agreeable to escape out of the close dull study, with its Algebra and Greek, to the bower of his tutor's daughter, with its lilac bushes and blackbirds; and who, at the lanky epoch of seventeen while flyfishing in the Dyne “with one fair spirit for his minister,” thought, and pronounced himself the “happiest of men!” For the most part, this felicitous portion of mankind no sooner attain the slang and impudence of the university, than they disavow the fair spirit

and her ministry ; exchange the rod and line for a hunting whip and top boots, and recur to the tenderness of the fair Ophelia of the Parsonage solely for the diversion of their club. But Berkley Murray was of a finer race than that of the beaux or bloods of his day. He loved Anne Danby in earnest ; and, what was more, believed that she earnestly loved *him* ; a persuasion which, in conjunction with the remembrance of her large dark eyes and lofty person, her musical tones and noble sentiments, enabled him to defy the attractions of the Sunday belles illuminating Magdalen Gardens with their best bonnets ; and induced him, summer after summer, to make Dynington a halting place for his caravan, on its pilgrimage between Oxford and Farrington Castle.

But with Nancy, the case was widely different. *Her* love for the brother of the angle was sincere ; but it regarded the *son of the Earl of Farrington*,—not her father's blue-eyed, fair-browed pupil. Her attachment was lavished upon the Honourable Mister Murray, not upon the Apollo Belvidère in a fustian jacket, who

furnished the Tile House with so many pike to be stuffed by Miss Betsy, and so many silver eels to be stewed (with the juice of a mouldy lemon) by her mother. Had he been as ugly as Sam Danby, and as prone to tobacco as her father, he would have suited her purpose as well. She had no heart for love:—the feelings of the Curate's daughter were wholly given over to the impulses of—AMBITION!

Yet, as they sat beneath the hazel bushes, weaving garlands bright with water flowers and projects for the future bright with hope, it was Murray who spoke of their marriage as of a thing pre-assured by fate, in spite of *his* dead ancestors and *her* living relations; while Nancy, with a sigh of deep despondency, assured him that such an alliance was irreconcilable with the prejudices of his family or the subservience of her own. While Berkley, in the enthusiasm of his passion, avowed his intention of declaring all to the Earl and braving his worst resentment, it was the clear-sighted Anne who compelled him to the prudence of patience; and persuaded him to entrust his destinies to

time. She knew that Lord Farrington was in a precarious state of health. Berkley's modest patrimony would be opulence to *her*, it seemed madness to provoke the danger of disinheritance. Her eloquence was effectual. Again the young lover proceeded to the castle, to dispatch back haunches and partridges to the banks of the Dyne; comforted by the assurance of his Anne's unchangeable fidelity (there was not a soul in the village to provoke her inconstancy, unless the apothecary's apprentice) and as firmly persuaded as young gentlemen of twenty-one are apt to be on such occasions, that he "was a notable fowler and had found a white crow!"

It is easy to conceive that the influence must have been indeed strong, which could impart to the curate's daughter a degree of fortitude enabling her to bear with her mother's reproofs, her sister's taunts, her brother's sullen scorn; or the obstinacy with which she now withdrew from the circle of their toils and pleasures, and devoted her time exclusively to the enlightenment of her mind. Her lover's hints had opened to her view a world unknown to *them*;

and imparted glimpses of certain graces and refinements, indispensable to persons moving within its sphere. Rising with the lark to study French, and watching with the owl to pursue the course of historical reading pointed out by Murray as within the scope of her father's library, she now curtailed her solitary rambles in the woods, and withdrew from the banks of the Dyne to the seclusion of her own miserable chamber. One only object engrossed her senses and dazzled her imagination. To become the Honourable Mrs. Berkley Murray, and as the Honourable Mrs. Berkley Murray to betray no superficial inferiority to the station into which she had manœuvered herself, blinded her eyes, deafened her ears, and blunted her perceptions to all the clamorous vulgarity of the Tile House and its inhabitants.

CHAPTER III.

It often falls out that we believe ourselves deceived by others, when we have deceived ourselves.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

BERKLEY'S ingenuous nature did not, however, admit of the scrupulous prudence in the maintenance of his secret, so much enforced by the schoolmaster's daughter. A public reproof from Lord Farrington on the length of his visits to Dynington, brought on a blush, which brought on a private inquiry; and the Earl had the satisfaction of learning from his own lips his son's engagement to Miss Nancy Danby, and determination to defy disinheritance and ruin for the sake of so peerless a creature!—Now the age of chivalry is over, there is unfortunately no mode left of dying in a lady's honour, more heroic than starvation.

Fortunately, Lord Farrington's elder son was of a temperament directly opposite to that of the Honourable Berkley. Finding that his father had already given vent to the effervescence of his indignation by inditing to the curate of Dyrnington a letter such as an Earl, blest with extensive clerical patronage, may alone venture to address to one of "the cloth," Lord Murray persuaded his lordship to abstain from any vehement demonstration of feeling towards the curate's pupil;—assuring him that a young man so thoroughly at the mercy of his own wild impulses as Berkley, would assuredly hamper himself by some new escapade, and surrender at discretion. And this prediction was verified in a shorter time than either the Lord by patent or the Lord by courtesy anticipated. Within six months of the fatal discovery of his betrothment, Berkley, after having been made a goose by Anne Danby, was made a pigeon by his cousin Frank Bradshaw, the most knowing fellow in the parish of St. James. Three thousand seven hundred pounds was a heavy fee for a younger brother to lay down on his

admission to that *récherche* corporation, the *roués* of fashion. But Lord Farrington was inclined to welcome this penalty of youthful folly as a trifling mulct; since it enabled him, without any wonderful exercise of tyranny, to break off all connexion between the lovers, and exile his son as a diplomat to the city of Washington. The prospect of inability to meet the payment of a debt of honour induced young Murray to subscribe to all conditions; and Lord Farrington, having left him in doubt of meeting his engagements with Frank Bradshaw and Co. till his passage was secured for New York and his baggage on board, contrived to exhibit the payment of his debts as a signal act of favour, even though coupled with a sentence of banishment from the Anne of his heart. Berkeley Murray was aware that he was attached to the American mission for a period of three years; but three years would only serve to perfect the charms and excellencies of Miss Danby, and engender mutual evidence of their mutual fidelity.

Such, however, was not the version of the

young gentleman's views and expectations which Lord Murray and his father conveyed to the Tile House in lieu of the farewell letter he deposited with his brother. Anne Danby discerned in a moment the frustration of all her hopes. She was too well acquainted with the malleable nature of her lover's heart to believe that one hundred and fifty-six weeks would pass without its taking the shape instigated by some Yankee Dalilah; and instead of betaking herself to the thickets of the Dyne to play Ophelia among the water weeds, sat herself down, dogged and tearless, to devise new schemes of future aggrandizement.—She was angry, not grieved;—indignant, not subdued.

It was probably the insight obtained into her character by Lord Murray, during a few hours' visit to Dynington the preceding summer, which enabled him to prognosticate this mood of mind. At *his* suggestion the son of Lord Farrington's family solicitor was despatched on a visit to Dynington, with an offer to the curate of a family living of some importance, on certain conditions which did not generally transpire. The nego-

ciation was an arduous one; and Mr. Thomas Clermont, who officiated on the occasion, being a good-looking, sharp-witted young man of eight-and-twenty, found the air of the country so advantageous to his health and spirits, that he contrived to prolong Mr. Danby's perplexities and Lord Farrington's conditions, till he succeeded on his own part in persuading the fair Nancy that she would display a very dignified disdain of the whole House of Murray, by forestalling Berkley's infidelity, and accepting the offer of his own hand and fortunes.

The dominie's wife, meanwhile, seeing that her awkward, useless Nancy had captivated the son of a lord, fancied she was expecting very little for her sparkling clever Betsy, in planning an alliance with the smart young attorney who was now their inmate; and it was a matter of unfeigned amazement to her, when Anne followed her one night into her bedroom (such a bedroom!) on their return from drinking tea at the vicarage, to acquaint her that, having banished the ungrateful Murray from her memory, she was about with the consent

of her father, to become Mrs. Thomas Clermont, and her father, with the consent of its patron, the Right Hon. the Earl of Farrington, about to become Rector of Lullingholme.

Within six months after Berkley Murray's precipitate voyage across the Atlantic all was satisfactorily adjusted. The bride and bridegroom passed the straits of Gibraltar on their way to Malta, where young Clermont had obtained an appointment of some value ; and, unless the thousand pounds bestowed as an outfit for the bride, came from the source which procured the bridegroom his place, it might be difficult to conjecture to what miraculous origin the Danbys were indebted for so sudden an affluence of the good things of this world. It is doubtless to be implied that Parson Danby derived his glebe, and Mrs. Clermont, junior, her amethyst necklace, from one and the same source,—the joyful gratitude of the Murray family towards all and sundry who assisted to redeem them from so ignominious a connection. Betsy and Sam were glad to get rid, on any terms, of a “ sister Anne,” whom they despised

for her fine ladyism, and hated for her good fortune. Lord Farrington was supposed, according to the most approved usage, to have bestowed his Church patronage on the tutor of his son; and indeed it was grateful to Sam and his father, to rest from their labours of cramming and drilling, and to Betsy and her mother from those of combing and scrubbing,—unirritated by the sorrowful gaze of the pair of large dark eyes, which had proved the bane of Berkley Murray, and the antidote of Mr. Thomas Clermont.

CHAPTER IV.

What man so wise, what earthly wit so ware,
As to descry the crafty'cunning train,
By which deceit doth mask in vizor fair
And cast her colours dyed deep in grain,
To seem like Truth, whose shape she well can feign.

SPENSER.

A SHOWY-LOOKING agreeable young married woman, arriving from England at an English Colony, is sure of being received with indulgence. The Clermonts were known to have "come out" under the patronage of the Earl of Farrington, who was known to have "come in" under the immediate patronage of the King; the gentleman was said to be the son of an eminent legal practitioner, and the lady the daughter of a respectable clergyman. These were fair titles to acceptance in society. Mrs.

Clermont, free from the servile associations of the Tile House, was pronounced to be elegant and well-informed; and Mr. Clermont was by nature one of those adroit, plausible, pliant personages, who contrive to render themselves agreeable into whatever dilemma of life they chance to fall. He had once maintained his popularity, when travelling from London to Bath as a seventh passenger in a stage-coach during the dog days; and had not received his first quarter's salary at "the little military hot-house," before he was pronounced on all sides to be "the best fellow in the world." The Clermonts gave little supper-parties—the Clermonts allowed droppers-in at luncheon—the Clermonts made their house so pleasant! While all the other ladies in Valetta were complaining of want of society, the bride, who, comparing it with Dynington, felt herself the most fortunate of women,—had no temptation to quarrel with the climate, or sigh for Hyde Park and the last new novel. *She* had never been half so happy before; and the animation of her countenance and cheerfulness of her manners, afforded con-

siderable relief to the naval and military heroes accustomed to the peevish nonchalance of the ladies of the Mediterranean. Unengrossed by the practice of frivolous accomplishments, she devoted the leisure left her by her husband's official duties, to the cultivation of her natural abilities; and, intent on adding Italian to French, resumed her studies with secret but unremitting diligence.

She was now gradually becoming a personage,—and a very popular personage. Berkley Murray (who, on the termination of his matrimonial perils and dangers, was recalled from banishment and thrust into Parliament,) was fated to learn from such of his dandy friends as extended their tour from Italy to Malta, that Mrs. Clermont was the most charming woman in the island; that she was at the head of the circles of Valetta and the idol of the garrison: while Anne was destined in her turn, and much to her amazement, to find from the newspapers, and other echoes of fame, that Mr. Murray,—Berkley Murray,—the Hon. Berkley Murray,—her own very particular and once loved Berk-

ley,—or, as he was termed in the house, “the honourable member for Lullingholme,” was creeping into the brightest sunshine of public favour. He was already accounted one of the best speakers of the day. The fervour of soul which formerly rendered him the dupe of her own manœuvres, now animated his mind into the passion of eloquence; and as the spokesman of his father’s party, the organ selected to give words to their measures, he was soon promoted to the rank and title of a “very rising young man.” Although too young for a statesman, he was quite old enough to be an orator.

Writers and readers of works of fiction, are too apt to limit their belief to the existence of tender passions resulting from personal attractions or abstract merit. This is a very erroneous view of human nature. A marriage originally instigated by interested motives, is not necessarily destitute of sentiment; nor should every woman, whose attention is captivated by a star and garter, be said to *sacrifice* herself to ambition. A man enamoured of a pretty face, falls in love with its possessor because she *has*

a pretty face ; and seeks her as a wife because his affections are moved towards her accordingly. Some persons have become seriously smitten by a woman's skill as a musician,--some by her enthusiasm as an artist ; and in the same way an ambitious woman becomes really attached to the proprietor of a coronet ; or an interested one, bestows her affections on an individual rich in a deer-park and bank-stock. It cannot be doubted that many a young lady has fallen tenderly in love with a man's position in the world, his equipage, and establishment ; and Mrs. Clermont's heart thrilled far more warmly towards the Honourable Commissioner Murray, than Nancy Danby's had ever done towards the graceful Berkley. She heard his praises with embarrassment ; exulted in his fame ; and sometimes, in the utmost secrecy of her heart, glanced towards the advantages likely to accrue to herself on her return to England from his notice and patronage. It was unnecessary to discuss the subject with a man of so congenial a nature as her husband : who, as the dirty son of a very dirty at-

torney, entertained no scruples concerning the nature of the ladder by which he was to climb up to the temple of Fortune. He was a man who regarded the art of living well with and in the world as the chief accomplishment of human nature; and was now grown dextrous with much practice. His success in society at Malta had put him in good humour with himself; and scarcely had he played the courteous host two years in the Mediterranean, when he acquired, with the most *suave* and ingratiating address, a degree of popularity rivalling even that of his handsome wife. It was impossible to attack more shrewdly the weak point of friend and foe. Every body liked to talk with so capital a listener as Clermont—every politician loved to argue with him, for he was always ready and even eager to be beaten. Did he converse with a blockhead—he knew nothing, and was only desirous to obtain instruction, on any point under discussion, whether the metaphysics of Kant, or the points of a pony; while in his intercourse with really clever men, he bored them with no impertinent manœuvres, but was ready

for an immediate encounter, hand to hand, and without periphrasis or peroration.

The supple and adroit character of Clermont would have been detected in the crowd of London society. His extreme pliancy could not but afford matter for suspicion ;—it is natural to infer nefarious motives from such a waste of dexterity. But in a southern climate, people are too idle to raise superfluous scruples and inquiries touching their neighbours ; and the official circles at Valetta are well content to take a pleasant fellow as they find him, without investigating whether he had ever been a pick-pocket, or is ever likely to be a privy councillor. A few ill-natured people thought him strangely indifferent to the growing intimacy of Mrs. Clermont at the Government House, as well as to the miraculous regularity with which the Lord High Commissioner condescended, day after day, to take tiffin in *his*. But Clermont was fortified against all jealous vagaries, by his knowledge of the frigid egotism of his wife ; and thought he was defending his own

cause sufficiently by whispering in confidence to all his acquaintance, that his lordship had the greatest confidence in Mrs. Clermont's judgment; that she occasionally acted as his secretary, in matters too weighty to be intrusted to the hands of hirelings; and that their long tête-à-têtes were occupied with the study of the last new political pamphlets from England. Thus enlightened, the good people of Valetta still sneered; but they said nothing. A few disappointed aspirants, indeed, could scarcely command their countenances to offer congratulations to the husband of the accomplished amanuensis, when, in the course of the year, he was preferred by his Majesty's Ministers to fill the second civil appointment in the island; for, though Mr. Thomas Clermont was celebrated for mysterious hints of the magnitude of his interest in the Cabinet, most people were of opinion that the recommendation which procured him his new place had reached Downing-street all the way from the Island of Malta.

A saint in crape is twice a saint in lawn!

—Mrs. Clermont, as the wife of a high official

personage, was now discovered to be one of the most gifted of her sex. The prosy of Valetta talked of going to hear *her* talk, just as the prosy of London affect to go and listen to Coleridge, that they may cram for their next *conversazione*. The markets of Marseilles and Bourdeaux were put in requisition to render her dinners as good as those eaten in Arlington-street; and all who had an interest in drinking their way to the boon-companionship of his Excellency, whom they were sure of meeting at Mrs. Clermont's supper-parties, made it a rule to drop in evening after evening at her house. Few places afford better opportunities for the extension of an intrigante's connexion than the island of Malta. In addition to the resident officials, civil and military, it is frequented by the officers of the crack frigates,—the loungers of the crack yachts,—the *élite* of the crack travellers;—and may be considered a complete house of call for fine gentlemen. A lady, at leisure to make herself agreeable in Valetta, has, in fact, almost as good a chance of popula-

rity as the Governess-general of India. Mrs. Clermont was not slow to profit by these advantages; and when she arrived at a Jermyn-street hotel, in the twenty-fourth year of her age and the fifth of her marriage, had managed to acquire a considerable acquaintance among the lordlings and Honourable Fredericks of the adjoining clubs of St. James's-street; to say nothing of the warm friendship of a certain Lady Gertrude Greyville, who had been driven to Malta by consumptive symptoms the preceding winter, and welcomed to a commodious and cheerful home by Mrs. Clement's well-timed hospitality. The two ladies became as Helena and Hermia; and strange to say, as the health of Lady G. improved, that of Mrs. C. gradually declined. Some people, being of opinion that consumption is a contagious malady, chose to regard Nancy as a martyr to friendship; while others, who consider affectation as still more infectious, protested that she only wanted an excuse for lying on the sofa, and wearing a becoming cap. But babblers such as these knew

nothing of Mrs. Clermont;—her views were far more excursive.

It may be noted, among the anomalies of the modern art of healing, that persons becoming hectic in England are instantly ordered to a warm climate,—Lisbon or Madeira during the war with France,—Italy or Sicily at the present time; but no sooner does some wretched individual begin to cough in the Mediterranean, than he is sentenced home “to try his natal air.” Mrs. Clermont, for some reasons best known to herself and her husband, had long been anxious to try hers; and her phthisical symptoms increased so rapidly a short time before Lady Gertrude’s return to England, that the grateful friend would not hear of leaving her behind. Lady Gertrude, who had been an heiress, and was still a beauty, was not in the habit of experiencing contradiction. She insisted that her beloved Anne (whose husband was detained at Malta by his official duties) should accompany her home; and, after a great deal of *douce violence*, Mrs. Clermont was persuaded to assent to a scheme of

her own planning. The Greyvilles had already obtained a passage in the frigate commanded by their relative, Captain Rosse; and due representation having been made of the hospitality exercised towards themselves by the Clermonts, and of the lady's interesting state of health, the kind-hearted sailor good-naturedly consented to burthen himself with an additional passenger. He had at least the satisfaction of seeing that the assistance thus afforded was most effective. It was surprising how rapidly the invalid recovered her health and spirits during the voyage. Before they reached the Bay of Biscay, she had attained the bloom of a damask rose; and when she arrived in town, and settled herself in a small but elegant house in Curzon-street, was restored to health as completely as Lady Gertrude herself.

Her recovery was, to say the least of it, exceedingly *à propos*. Mrs. Clermont arrived in the middle of the London season; by no means a convenient moment for being either sick, or sorry, or ugly. It was May; bright, shining, stirring, auspicious May; and the Queen of the

Mediterranean seemed bent on beguiling the time, by looking as like it as possible. Scarcely had Captain Rosse circulated at his club the news of the Greyvilles' arrival, with a tribute of applause to the cheerful disposition of their friend, and the charm she had contributed to their voyage, when all her former Mediterranean votaries thronged to greet her. Her gates were more besieged by Honourable Post Captains, than those of the Admiralty,—by boy Colonels and baby Captains, than those of the Horse Guards;—and the whole United Service Club was of opinion, that never had their dear Mrs. Clermont looked so handsome, or been so agreeable. All their wives, mothers, or sisters, were brought to leave grateful visiting tickets for the amiable woman who had been as their wife, mother, or sister, during their stay at Malta;—while the *empressement* of Lady Gertrude's noble family, the De Tracys, knew no bounds. In the course of a week or two, Mrs. Clermont found herself almost as much the darling of London society, as she had ever been of that of Valetta.

All this she had of course foreseen and intended; but her intentions and prognostications did not stop here. Her object was Murray,—the influential Murray,—the rising statesman, the embryo *great man*; and the agitated start, deep flush, and tremulous demeanour with which she saw herself recognised by her once dear Berkley, in the flurry of a fashionable ball-room, served to convince her that, if her influence over his feelings had been suspended, it was by no means extinguished. He was by her side in a moment;—at her feet on the following day!—

From the moment of Mrs. Clermont's *debût* in the great world, she had been hailed as adorable; but this last circumstance was decisive. Berkley Murray was the lion of the hour; the man whose oratory drew crowds to the ventilator, and filled the newspapers with notes of admiration; the man without whom no dinner-giver could venture to dine, nor a feeder of the *côteries* presume to whistle her menagerie of outlandish beasts together. No sooner was it seen or suspected that “Lady Gertrude Grey-

ville's lovely and interesting friend" was also the lovely and interesting friend of Berkley Murray, than she became a very goddess indeed. It certainly would have puzzled the late wife of the reverend Doctor Danby, fully as much as the mother of the Palmer in Marmion, to detect her child in the distinguished-looking young woman who now held Almack's and his Majesty's Secretary of State in thrall, and shone as "the Cynosure of neighbouring eyes" among the fashionables of May Fair.

Mrs. Clermont had in fact a thousand personal claims to notice. She was tall, graceful, finely formed; with the most luxuriant black hair, and the most animated countenance in the world. Her looks were all expression; and her way of listening to a story eloquence itself. Her taste was pure and highly cultivated; her tact needed no cultivation. No one dressed so well,—no one talked so well,—no one walked so well,—no one rode, no one did the honours of her house, no one afforded so bright an ornament to other people's, as Mrs. Clermont;—there was a certain airiness in her

appearance that perfected the elegance of her face and figure. The *beau-monde* was fairly taken by storm! They asked no questions about her; voted the Hon. Berkley a very lucky dog; and either did not know, or did not care, whether there happened to be a Mr. Clermont in existence;—whether she had still a husband or had ever had a father.

CHAPTER V.

There is no defence against reproach but obscurity. It is a kind of concomitant to greatness; as satires and invectives were an essential part of a Roman triumph.

ADDISON.

“ DOCTOR,” said the Earl of Farrington, (not the old earl but the new earl,—Berkley’s father having been gathered to the earls his ancestors in the family vault). “ I see the name of a Mrs. Clermont in the newspapers. *Your* daughter cannot surely be resident in town?”

Old Darnley, who had now the advantage of two paralytic attacks and an excessive deafness to encrease his original dulness, looked blank and said nothing.

“ His lordship inquires, sir, whether my sister Nancy is living in London?” bawled the Rev-

erend Samuel, most irreverently into the ear of his parent.

“Nancy?—thank you kindly, my lord!” squeaked the old doctor, stopping short at the gate of the church-yard; the conversation being an effort of condescension on the part of the patron of Lullingholme towards the officious rector and the curate his son, who thought it their duty to escort him, after sermon, from the door of the vestry to that of his carriage. “My daughter, Mrs. Clermont, writes me word her health is much better for her voyage home, but not yet strong enough for a journey here; and so she has taken lodgings in town for the advantage of medical advice. Not but what, in my opinion, our good Doctor Quinine here might have brought her round as well as all the king’s physicians in a lump. Going?—your lordship’s obedient humble servant.”

“Medical advice!—delicate health!” mused the earl, while his carriage rolled back to the Castle, as if the head coachman rejoiced as heartily as his lord’s lordship that their weekly duties were over. “Then, after all, it *cannot* be

old Danby's daughter whose comings and goings are so carefully recorded in the public prints; who dances at Almack's, and adorns the drawing-room. I thought she had taken a most miraculous stride in the world. 'The beautiful and accomplished Mrs. Clermont!' what could put it into my head to confuse old Danby's beetle-browed maypole with this new meteor of fashion!"

His lordship had not half done wondering at his blunder, when the deep rumble of passing under an embattled gateway informed him he had arrived at home; a circumstance the less cheering that he had merely taken up his quarters at the Castle on his road from another seat to the metropolis, and had not a single visitor, nor the hope of one, to render the three days he was about to pass in his own company less formidably dull. The prospect of a long spring Sunday, passed alone in the old library, induced him almost to regret that he had not followed the family custom, and invited both vicar and curate home to dinner. But "a change" was on the point of overtaking "the spirit of his

dream," which rendered such a catastrophe superfluous.

As he passed through the inner vestibule, Lord Farrington was struck by the sight of a hat lying in a familiar guise on the marble slab; nor did the bosom of Robinson Crusoe beat with wilder vehemence on detecting the footprint on the sand, than that of the desolate lord at the sight of a "town-made" Bondstreet sold beaver, so full of promise as the one before him. He anticipated no common guest. There was a dashing originality in the cut of the article, that convinced him the incomparable Frank Bradshaw was his inmate; and scarcely was the door of the book-room thrown open by the sedate, well-powdered, priggish butler in waiting, when he beheld his cousin in propria persona, attempting to vault over the parapet wall bounding the terrace.

"Frank! Frank Bradshaw, my dear boy!" ejaculated Lord Farrington; "by Jove, I'm delighted to see you!" But he might as well have restricted his apostrophe to the hat. Bradshaw was, according to his custom, engrossed by the

object of the moment; and till he had fairly accomplished his project, and cleared at a bound the terrace wall, with the flower border and the gravel walk below, his noble friend had no chance of catching eye, or ear, or tongue.

“Farr! my fine fellow,” cried he at last, when, perceiving the arrival of his host, he dashed back through the open window, and was stretched at full length on the air-cushion sofa, with the celerity of a Harlequin. “Here we cross, at the equinoctial point—*you* up to town for the season, — *I* to the North for salmon fishing. Like to see my new fly?—Linnean Society going to present me with a medal for the invention. Got a thousand ready made up. Caught two swallows and a sand-martin with them already, angling out of the britchka as came down from town.—Like to see one?”

“Thank you, I am no judge. My brother Berkley is the Piscator of the family; or *was*, before he took to spreading his nets in Parliament, and baiting his hooks with——”

“Berkley?—Berkley Murray is just now floundering in a stream whence fish are landed

only to be made bait of. Berkley!—no, no! *his* days of rod and line are past and over. But to judge from appearances he has provided a *rod* for his own back in a new line;—eh?—ah?—*rod—line—smart—eh?*”

“A new line?—I should have thought that Downing-street left him little leisure for novelty hunting?”

“By the way, they say this Mrs. Clermont is *no* novelty. It seems that she and Berkley used to play Phœbus and Daphne together while he was an urchin in petticoats!—eh?—ah?—Phœbus and Daphne?—eh?”

“Mrs. Clermont!—The lovely and accomplished individual we read of in the Morning Post, is, after all, then, positively and truly old Danby’s ugly hoyden?—Phœbus and Daphne, my dear Frank!—Trust me, the nymph has experienced a metamorphosis twice as miraculous!”

“*Ugly?* never beheld a more splendid creature! A poet’s *beau idéal* of Cleopatra;

Fair is her brow, but darkly delicate
Her cheek!

Mignon in her maturity!—Ninon in her girl-

hood!—His Majesty's Secretary for the Home Department has every excuse for his infatuation."

"Do you mean that Murray is making an ass of himself by the publicity of his homage to this obscure adventurer?"

"Obscure?—Mrs. Clermont is just now the person *par excellence*. Society has always a bagged fox in reserve, to insure a good season's sport. No matter who,—what,—where,—which,—why;—Parson Irving, St. John Long, Ramohun Roy, the Duchesse de Berri, Fanny Kemble, Walter Scott,—good, bad, indifferent, far or near;—Hatton Garden, Fonthill, Skolholt, or the ball of St. Paul's."

"And my father's attorney's son's wife, then, is, at this present gossiping, the centre of the fashionable sphere?—Oh! ye Athenians!"

"Eh! —what! —how! —Lord Farrington's son's attorney's wife, did you say?—Mrs. Clermont the wife of an attorney's son?—*Mrs.* Clermont—the Mrs. Clermont?—A frank, my dear Farr!—a frank! I'm a made man. Lady

Louisa Marcham will put me into her white book for the remainder of my days, for such a piece of intelligence. A frank, an thou lovest me ! ”

“ Nay, I shall lend no aid to the circulation of a libel so big with the greatness of truth, respecting any *dulcinea* of my brother’s. If Murray,—or the stars,—or the foolhood of the great world, choose to instal Miss Nancy as a goddess,—with all my heart ! Let her even call herself the Lady Anne Clermont, and I will do nothing to nip her budding honours.”

“What !—connive at a tacit imposture ?—Fie, my dear Farr !—I tell you this thing of pounce and parchment is received as a fashionable gem of the first water.”

“ And what then ?—In these enlightened times, when every blockhead one meets affects the cunning blade, and all the women in the world pretend to be thought women *of* the world, it is delicious to see the knowing ones taken in. In spite of Almack’s, with all its vouchers,—in spite of Tattersall’s, with all its

pedigrees,—one sometime finds such gross frauds successful ! People who insist upon seeing into a millstone, are so apt to break their noses in the examination ! ”

“ My philosophy is of a very different nature,” cried Frank, taking a gold patent pen-maker from his waistcoat pocket, and proceeding to the writing table. “ The only *esprit* to which *I* pretend is *esprit de corps*. In the purity of my conscience I really can’t allow Lady Louisa and my own especial *clique* to be imposed upon ;—So here goes—

‘ DEAR LADY LOU,

‘ Cut the Clermont *sans cérémonie* (The creature is a country curate’s daughter,—a London attorney’s daughter-in-law) ; and place your escape from her acquaintance to the account of
Your ladyship’s obedient,
‘ Farrington Castle.’ F. BRADSHAW.’

There!—I need not add ‘ Sunday,’ by way of date. —Who writes letters in the country *except* on Sundays ? ”

“ Well, my dear Bradshaw, since you insist on making a little mischief, *here* is your envelope. The history may circulate for a week or two, as one of ‘ Bradshaw’s entire ;’ and there will be no great harm done.”

There *was* harm done, however ;—very considerable harm. An association between Frank’s anecdote and Lord Farrington’s frank, with some mysterious connection previously suspected between Mrs. Clermont and the Murray family, induced more faith in the tale than was usually bestowed on Frank Bradshaw’s romances ; and Lady Louisa, whose designs on Berkley had been circumvented by the arrival of the Maltese goddess, now permitted herself to assume towards her a tone of the most piquant impertinence. It is surprising how far a woman of fashion may push her insults, having the majority on her side ! The word ‘ adventurer,’ enlisted a considerable party on that of Lady Louisa ; both prompting her and prompted by her, to pursue a war of words of the most harassing and vexatious kind with the discomfited lady of Berkley Murray’s love.

The old history of Mademoiselle de la Vallière and the Duchess of Orleans, was accordingly renewed. It is not to be supposed that the high-spirited Murray would leave her exposed to the impertinence of a set of insolent women, to whom she was only obnoxious on account of her devoted friendship for himself. No sooner did they commence their attack upon his lovely friend, no sooner did their raillery draw tears from her fine eyes, than putting lance in rest, he appeared publicly as her champion. Generously sensitive to the indignities incurred by Mrs. Clermont for his sake, he rendered his homage more marked, more public than ever; was seldom to be seen in the circles of the *beau monde* without his Circe leaning on his arm; was constantly to be detected behind the crimson curtain of Lady Gertrude's opera box; and to be *suspected* behind that of Mrs. Clermont's boudoir window,—when a general sentence of “not at home” excluded daily multitudes of less interesting visitors. Tears afford, after all, one of the most potent arguments of the sex; and (from the period of those wept by Maria Theresa

to her Hungarian States which collected an army round her throne, to those with which Miss O'Neill washed away the offences of Mrs. Haller in the sight of all the prudes in the kingdom) never was there a more effective flood than the one extorted from the onyx eyes of Mrs. Clermont by the insolence of her rival.

Perhaps it was the dread of a second attack upon his susceptibility from the same channel, that induced the exertion of Secretary Murray's interest, by which (six months after Mrs. Clermont's arrival in England) his Majesty's Gazette announced his Majesty's nomination of Thomas Vernon Clermont, Esq. to be a Commissioner of his Majesty's Excise. Perhaps he inferred from the depression of her spirits, how eager she was that her loving lord should become the servant of his Majesty's Government, in any other department than the Colonial?—Frank Bradshaw and Lady Louisa Marcham thought otherwise. *They* declared to each other, and even whispered to Lord Farrington, that Mrs. Clermont was aware the world had begun to wonder how she could *be* so ill, and *look* so well;—and how soon

she would find it convenient to return to her conjugal duties in the Mediterranean. The grimace made by Frank, on learning that the Clermonts had engaged a capital mansion in Spring-gardens which it was their intention to render a general rendezvous to the official world, was almost as ripe with implications as the wagging of Lord Burleigh's head in the Critic. But it signified little what was said or thought on the subject. Mr. C. was now the annuitant of the country to the amount of between two and three thousand a year; and Mrs. C., at five-and-twenty, had accomplished a triumph over time, place, and circumstance, entitling her to rank among the most successful *intrigantes* of the day.

CHAPTER VI.

Every thing may be mimicked by hypocrisy, but humility and love united. The more rare humility and love, the more radiant when they meet. LAVATER.

It was Christmas when the newspapers announced that Mr. and Mrs. Clermont had taken possession of their new residence :—it was Christmas when Lady Gertrude Greyville read aloud to a small circle of guests assembled at Tracy Park, the Hon. Mr. Murray's formal apologies for declining her invitation for the holidays.

“How provoking!” cried she, as her husband entered the room. “I have had a series of disappointments about our party. The Clermonts are engaged in arranging their new establishment; that amusing creature Bradshaw never stirs from their fireside; and now, it seems that we cannot even get Berkley Murray! We shall

have no charades, no *tableaux*, no theatricals, no any thing."

"We can do very well without them," said Bob Greyville, a dull man, who hated to be overcrowded at his own table by the brilliant coterie of wits assembled by his wife; "I hate people who are professionally amusing. All their monkey-tricks are rehearsed beforehand: and it is making a mere stage of society to be always acting and applauding."

"Acting *or* applauding," said Lady Gertrude laughing. "Don't let us suppose the actors are compelled to encourage their own efforts."

"I *am* sorry, however that Murray cannot come," resumed Greyville; who had some little sympathy with a man as silent if not as stupid as himself—"Murray's a very superior person;—never speechifies except in the House,—nor dictates, unless to his underlings in office. I like Murray amazingly."

"Mr. Murray *is* a very superior person," said old Sir Robert Greyville.

"A very rising man, certainly," added his lady.

“A very agreeable companion,” said Antonia, their daughter, with her head studiously declined over her cup of coffee.

“A devilish good fellow!” cried Captain Rosse, who was seated beside his cousin. “Not an atom of official priggism about him. And yet what an advance he has made since he returned from America! Very few people guessed what Murray had in him, when first he came into Parliament.”

“Mr. Murray is very quiet, very undemonstrative,” replied Miss Greyville, to whom he seemed to turn for an answer, though his observations were addressed to the table in general.

“Very quiet, till he is roused. But strike out a single spark, and no one can tell where the conflagration will end.”

“No uncommon case. It would have been a greater miracle for him who smote the rock in Horeb, to staunch than to call forth the gushing stream.”

“That’s just one of Murray’s own figures of speech!” cried Rosse heartily. “Murray has

all the enthusiasm of genius;—not the froth of mere effervescence, but the fervour of a noble spirit.”

He was rewarded for this sally by a smile from his cousin Antonia, such as his attempts to please could not always elicit from her sweet lips; and Lady Greyville, who had been looking anxiously towards them during their colloquy, now began an eager inquiry of her daughter-in-law, respecting the drive projected for their morning’s amusement. But Captain Rosse was not to be silenced on a theme that seemed productive of satisfaction to Miss Greyville.

“Many people think that, on Lord Wolstan’s retirement, Berkley Murray will succeed to the ministry. I have heard it said, indeed, that he is to have a peerage; but I fancy they can’t do without him in the Lower House.”

“Surely he is very young for such an office?” inquired Antonia, raising her face and discovering the blush by which it was overspread. “His friends would look with some anxiety, I

should imagine, on so responsible an appointment?"

"No, by Jove!—His *friends* would take it quietly enough; his enemies would be the people to raise an outcry. I never saw the man yet, who did not resign himself patiently to the heaviest responsibility incurred by a bosom friend's acceptance of office."

"Mr. Murray has, however, many old and faithful friends," persisted Antonia mildly.

"Ay!—and a few new and faithless ones, or I am much mistaken," interrupted Rosse. "Witness the tribe of Clermont, in all its odour of profaneness."

"The Clermonts can scarcely be called friends of Mr. Murray. His intimacy with them has done, and is likely to do him irreparable injury," observed Sir Robert gravely.

"Remember, good people, that, though out of sight, I am not out of hearing," said Lady Gertrude, who had risen from the table to answer a note in an adjoining room, the door of which was ajar. "They are at least *my* friends;

and, as Sir Peter says, ‘I leave their character among you.’ ”

“A valuable legacy, truly,” observed Rosse in a low tone, to be heard only by Miss Greyville. “Lady Gertrude takes care that we shall not have too much reason to thank her liberality.”

Antonia was silenced. She knew that the anxious eyes of her father and mother were upon her face; the anxious ears of her sister-in-law open to catch her most trifling observation; and the subject was one on which she could scarcely touch, without giving pain and offence to each and all.

Sir Robert Greyville, father of Bob and Antonia, happened to be the nearest country neighbour of the Earl of Farrington; and their politics being exactly of a par, while their disparity of condition secured them from all bickerings of county rivalry, the two families grew up together in the good fellowship that approaches nearest to friendship. Cricketing parties brought the young people together in summer; archery meetings in autumn; skating and Christmas

balls in winter; and their dancing, riding, and singing lessons were taken in common, during the spring in town. Lady Helen Murray was the hand-in-hand companion of Maria and Antonia Greyville; and Bob Greyville, the favourite crony of Lord Murray and Berkley. Now nothing is more common than for young ladies brought up in the monotonous seclusion of their fathers' parks, to fall in love with "the favourite cronies" of their elder brothers; and whereas the Lady Helen, instead of following the vulgar routine, saw fit to become Marchioness of Holmebush, while Maria (whose character had somewhat of an angelic or evangelic tendency) gave her hand to a church dignitary of the neighbourhood, in weeds for his third wife,—poor Antonia was destined to make amends for their perversity, by devoting her whole heart and mind to young Berkley; whose own heart and mind were so deeply pledged to the heroine of Dynington. Her passion, according to the approved forms of romance, grew and prospered in proportion to its hopelessness; for "Love, like the wall-flowers,"

say the ballad-mongers, "flourishes best among ruins."

Antonia Greyville was, however (jesting apart), a very lovely and amiable girl; who, reared in comparative retirement, and mixing with few young people of her own age, had very naturally attached herself to that member of the Murray family, who most resembled herself in good looks and good qualities. Bob, her brother, having eloped with the heiress Lady Gertrude de Tracy before the attainment of his majority, and her elder sister having betaken herself about the the same time to the sanctities of Madeley vicarage, Antonia was early left alone with her parents; who, discerning her predilection for the younger son of their old friend Lord Farrington, and ignorant of his engagements elsewhere, had no scruple in sanctioning their intimacy during Berkley's college vacations. They even hinted their suspicions to Lord Farrington, and received his ready concurrence in their opinion that Antonia's twenty thousand pounds, and the thousand per annum destined by the Earl to his younger son, would afford the young

couple a sufficient maintenance, when brightened by the hopes which talents so considerable as those of Berkley Murray seemed to sanction.

It was in this state of affairs that intelligence of the hero of their romance's engagement, burst upon the astonished trio!—The first difficulty that presented itself, was the task of extending the disclosure to Antonia. The idol of her parents (who had been somewhat alienated by the wayward marriages of their two elder children), the gentle Antonia Greyville was dear even to the selfish old lord of Farrington Castle; and her mild disposition and steady prudence, redeemed from the charge of egotism by enthusiastic nobleness of spirit,—were indeed such as to justify a partial father in seeking her as a bride for his son. One of the great aggravations of Berkley's offence in Lord Farrington's eyes, was the impossibility it brought with it of welcoming home Antonia as his daughter; while Sir Robert and his wife had no scruple in accusing young Murray of having practised ungenerously on the affections of their child. In this emergency,

Antonia became the firm and generous advocate of the banished Berkley.

“Remember, dear mother,” said she, attempting to pacify the exasperated Lady Greyville, “that we only are to blame. *We* invited him here,—tried to make his visits cheerful and induce his return. His walks, and drives, and studies with me, if not proposed by ourselves, were at least eagerly acquiesced in; and believe me, on my most faithful word, that not a syllable has ever passed his lips which could be interpreted into a declaration of love.”—

“As an engaged man he had no right to foster the growth of an attachment on your part, such as he cannot but have clearly perceived.”

“I trust not,” cried Antonia, colouring slightly. “I trust I have not so far tarnished my self-respect as to make *him* aware of a weakness I had no motive to conceal from my mother. No! I am convinced that Murray attributed my predilection for his society to the same friendship, the same cordiality of early regard, which brought him hither.”

“Then why not confide to you the perplexities of his position?”

“Probably he was bound by some promise of secrecy to Miss Danby. Nay! dear madam, turn not away! I may be blind or partial in my interpretation of his conduct—but be not, in your turn, too severe. Remember how many difficulties poor Berkley has just now to overcome; and do not aggravate Lord Farrington’s displeasure by the confession of *our* mortification.”

Nor did these generous effusions of sentiment proceed from girlish bravado. Antonia’s first interview with Lord Farrington after his son’s departure for America, was a trying ordeal; but by assumed cheerfulness she completely deceived the old man into a notion that he had wasted a very superfluous degree of sympathy on the sufferings of his neighbour’s child. Nay, even Lady Greyville and Sir Robert were at last induced to admit that they had overrated the extent of their daughter’s attachment. Antonia would have accounted it a sin to indulge in the display of feelings likely

to give them pain. Divers, however, and diversely eligible were the offers of marriage to which she turned a deaf ear, or persuaded her father and mother to oppose their disapproval, and if it were indeed her object to drive the young *attaché* from her memory, she certainly did not seek to secure his ejection by the substitution of another in his place. Labouring strenuously to prove to Sir Robert and her mother that she had regained her composure of mind, she now entered with animation into the diversions of the metropolis; and dressed, danced, and smiled, among the most popular dressers, dancers, and smilers of the great world. But she had no confidante,—no Norah in white dimity, to whom to admit the violence done to her feelings by the resignation of self to the happiness of her father and mother; or it would have been seen that there was something touching and holy in her forced gaiety.

It is only by favour of poetical license, that girlhood is represented as a season of strong passions. No heroine, tragic epic or romantic, can be permitted to exceed the early blush of her

teens; nor would the most philosophical reader be inclined to lavish his sympathy on a Helen of thirty years' experience. But those best acquainted with the sex are aware that passion is incompatible with legal minority; and that damsels of sweet sixteen are far more addicted to a *foiblesse* for cherry-pie and a new sash, than for heroic virtues or heroic frailties. Even Shakspeare has endowed his exquisite Juliet, in all but her earliest scenes, with impulses far too impassioned for her years; and of all his heroines, Miranda alone is a girl, — a mere girl—and nothing but a girl. But Antonia Greyville was within only two years of Berkley Murray's age; and when at four-and-twenty he re-crossed the Atlantic, *she* had attained the sober demeanour and maturer impulses of twenty-two. No longer intoxicated by the flatterers of the ball-room or fripperies of fashionable life, it was her pleasure, — her painful pleasure, — to listen to details of the honours achieved by the young secretary, and the unexampled popularity attending his career. His fame was now public property:

the “one loved name,” afforded the burthen of general conversation. “Murray’s oratory,”—“Murray’s influence,”—“Murray’s steadiness and self-possession,” were incessantly bruited in her ears.

But while listening admiringly and with the truest sympathy to all these praises, she fancied herself proof against any evil influence over her feelings. After the first fatal moment of disenchantment which proved that, while wandering by her side summer after summer in the woods of Farrington, with Shakspeare in their hands, and living poetry all around them, the affections she had believed her own were far away at Dynington, with the tutor’s daughter, she had never deceived herself touching Berkley and his sentiments; and not even the marriage of Anne Danby prompted her to renew for a moment the dream of her defeated hopes. If Berkley had resisted her influence while fair and young and fondly confiding, he was not likely to find it more potent now that her cheek was paler, her smile less frequent, her words less unreservedly ingenuous. Lady Greyville, how-

ever, thought otherwise. *She* saw that the fervour and enthusiasm of Murray's character were now sobered into a more common-place frame of mind;—that he was no longer a visionary and a theorist, but an active, practical, matter-of-fact official man;—that instead of being dazzled, as in his buoyant youth, by a showy exterior, he was now attracted by those better qualities of heart and mind in which her daughter's superiority was unimpeachable. He had grown reserved too in proportion as he found himself an object of general attention; or, overwearied by his public exertions, sought only the society of persons with whom long acquaintance placed him at his ease. Among these the Grevilles stood first. His old friend Bob and his fashionable wife were valetudinarianizing abroad; but Sir Robert and Sir Robert's wife and daughter, were still within a few hour's reach of Farrington Castle during the holidays; still stationed in Arlington-street from February to July, to be dropped in upon, and consulted and chosen as the consolers of his public irritations, whenever the rising politician

could snatch a leisure hour from the peremptory duties of his calling. Antonia, indeed (falling into the reverse of her former error), philosophically attributed his preference of their society to that of the brilliant crowd in which he was courted, to the mere force of habit, and the influence of old acquaintanceship; but her parents were of opinion, that she was no less mistaken than before.

There was, indeed, one argument in favour of such an opinion, with which they were at present unacquainted. Berkley had originally attributed Anne Danby's marriage to the undue influence of her parents and his own; and, regarding her as a victim, was inclined to overlook those defects of character, which increased knowledge of the world had created among the reminiscences of their connexion. He had become conscious that her disposition was flighty,—her sentiments exaggerated,—her manners coarse,—her person defective; but so long as he was bound to consider her sacrificed to *his* interests and prospects, it was impossible to withdraw his affections. Anne, his own be-

loved Anne, must not be the less dear to his heart that she had been forced, for his sake, into the arms of a vulgar attorney.

But this illusion (all-potent during his banishment at Washington) vanished very shortly after his arrival in that hubbub of tumult and scandal, which has established a telegraph of gossip on the banks of the Thames in communion with the uttermost ends of the earth. The first inquiry hazarded of the first Mediterranean traveller of the season with whom the first fashionable dinner party brought him in contact, sufficed to inform him that the vulgar attorney's repining wife was the leading star of the gaieties of Valetta; and that, instead of cherishing a pensive tenderness for the lover of her youth, all her efforts to please were directed towards the captivation of a vulgar old Lord High Commissioner, who loved her better than any thing but arrack punch. Interested motives could have alone suggested so vile a degradation of her charms; and it was natural enough that the disappointed Murray should turn from the glaring picture of the bold, flirting,

intriguing Mrs. Clermont, to the mild tranquillity and confiding friendship of Antonia Greyville, and feel that he could not love her enough in apology for having formerly preferred the fierce and unfeminine daughter of Mr. Danby. He redoubled his attentions--was continually at Sir Robert's house. His confidential conversations with the well-read and discriminating Antonia, embraced even the principles and projects of his public life. From such a companion what indeed had he to conceal?—To such a companion whom could he possibly prefer? In her he found a soother of his labours—a strengthener of his principles—a fosterer of his hopes—a guardian angel for his fireside;—and what could he wish for more?—Alas! it was no wish of his which, at that fatal crisis, summoned Mrs. Clermont from the Mediterranean. It was no preconceived act of treachery which caused the rising blushes to wither anew on Antonia's cheek—and a second vision of happiness (a second, how far dearer than the first!) to vanish from her hopes.

On learning the *intrigante's* arrival in Lon-

don, in company with her own flighty sister-in-law, Miss Greyville experienced no anxiety beyond a regret that Murray should be molested by her presence. But his visits to Arlington-street soon grew shorter and less frequent. In proportion as Mrs. Clermont's fame and popularity extended, Antonia saw her own influence decline; till, at length, it became a consolation to her feelings that he withdrew himself wholly from her society. After all that she had felt and hoped, it was indeed difficult to receive him with courtesy as the avowed lover of Mrs. Clermont.

CHAPTER VII.

Opinion governs all mankind,
Like the blind's leading of the blind ;
For he that hath no eyes in 's head
Must be by a dog glad to be led ;
And no beasts have so little in 'em
As that inhuman brute—opinion !

BUTLER,

LADY Gertrude Greyville, although well-meaning and inoffensive, was too volatile to obtain the confidence, too heartless to warm the affections of her husband's family. Her mother-in-law, out of all patience with the friend she had injudiciously selected at Malta and unluckily brought back with her to England, did not however venture to entrust her discretion with the circumstances with which their intimacy with Lord Farrington had made them acquainted, touching the conduct and princi-

ples of Dr. Danby's daughter; or with the evil she had wrought against Antonia's hopes and Antonia's happiness. Lady Gertrude dearly loved her gentle sister-in-law; and her first impulse would have been to attack Mr. Murray on the subject of his inconstancy, and her next to call on her friend, Mrs. Clermont, for her exculpation.

Not a syllable therefore was suffered to transpire in her hearing; and nothing but the intervention of Antonia's lucky planet prevented the whole party being assembled together at Tracy Park for the holidays. Lady Gertrude thought she had done wonders in inviting her cousin, Captain Rosse, whom her whole family were pressing upon Miss Greyville's acceptance; and it was simply with a view to her own pleasure and diversion that she tried to secure the company of Murray and their common friends the Clermonts. She was not unaware, indeed, that the breath of scandal had breathed somewhat bitterly on the reputation of her friend; that at Malta, the gallant Governor—in London, the Right Honourable

Secretary,—were supposed to exercise an undue influence over her feelings, and be unduly influenced in their turn by her fascinations. But Lady Gertrude was an innocent person, and had proportionate faith in the well-doing of other people. Herself of unblemished reputation, she had nothing to gain by deteriorating the fair fame of her friends; and only loved her dear Mrs. Clermont the more for having been so vilely calumniated.

Meanwhile, notwithstanding all Lady Greyville's indignation on hearing that Murray had evaded the visit to Tracy Park to which she had looked forward as still capable of turning the scale of his affections in Antonia's favour, and all her envy and jealousy of the intriguing belle on whom his company was bestowed elsewhere, Mrs. Clermont had in fact no share in his absence. Scarcely were his excuses despatched to his old friend Bob, and his old friend Mrs. Clermont's new friend Lady Gertrude, when an express from Farrington Castle summoned him to the bed-side of his dying brother. An accident in hunting, aggravated

by unskilful surgery, terminated the career of one who was looking forward to half a century's enjoyment of his honours; and Berkley returned to town at the expiration of a fortnight "a belted Earl and a' that." The ardour of Mrs. Clermont's welcome was commensurate with his increase of honours; and poor Lady Greyville, who was growing old and sickly, became crosser than ever in considering from how brilliant a destiny the interposition of the intrigante had been the means of excluding the gentle Antonia.

"My dear Lady Greyville," cried Frank Bradshaw, as they were all dining together one day at Lady Louisa Marcham's, "we look to you to expound to us the mystery of Farrington's connexion with these Clermont people?—You are a near country neighbour, I fancy, of the Murrays. I remember my friend the late Lord saying"—he stopped short; recollecting that his friend the late Lord's saying too nearly regarded Miss Greyville and her influence over Berkley to be uttered in the young lady's presence; particularly when she had the grace to

blush so intensely on the mere mention of his name.

“I believe it is generally known,” replied the old lady, considerably vexed, and having paused to collect her breath after a full glass of madeira, “that Mr. Thomas Clermont is son to Lord Farrington’s late man of business.”

“*Anglice* attorney!” cried Bradshaw.

“And that Mrs. Clermont,” supplementized Sir Robert, “is the daughter of the Vicar of Lullingholme, Lord Farrington’s nominee.”

“*Anglice*, his old tutor!—Ay, ay! just as I had always heard. And these are the people whom his influence has forced into society; and whom his patronage is gradually raising to distinction!”—

“And why not?” asked Antonia, mildly. “Mr. Clermont is said to be a man of superior abilities and great official application; and Mrs. Clermont is a graceful and accomplished woman, an ornament to every circle in London.”

“Miss Greyville, shall I have the honour of sending you some jelly?” asked Frank Brad-

shaw, with one of his most elaborate sneers, as if he thought her tirade unworthy of reply.

“Lord Farrington has just got the mastership of ——’s for a brother of Mrs. Clermont’s!” observed Lady Louisa Marcham, to whom the very names of Clermont and Danby were an abomination.

“Dr. Samuel Danby is understood to be a very learned man,” said Antonia distinctly, and nothing daunted by Bradshaw’s impertinent inferences.

“And only last year he got the Archdeaconry of Leicester for her father!”

“What nobleman in office has done less for his tutor?”—again observed Miss Greyville. “If Dr. Danby should even live to be a Bishop, there would be nothing miraculous in his elevation.”

“For my part,” cried Lady Louisa, “I am too warmly Lord Farrington’s friend, not to regard his connexion with the Clermont *clique* with alarm and disgust. Mrs. Clermont is the most artful woman in the world!”

“’Tis a pity he can’t make her his private

secretary," cried Frank Bradshaw. "They say she originally pursued her intrigues at Malta in some such capacity."

"She does act as his privy councillor," sneered Lady Louisa. "I saw her coming out of Farrington House the other day, at a very singular hour. I did not know that even ministers of state were privileged to receive morning visits from ladies."

"Well, well, good people!" cried the good-natured Rosse, vexed to see Miss Greyville vexed, by hearing the conduct of her old friend and neighbour so impartially discussed, "if Mrs. Clermont were to exert herself for *our* captivation one thousandth part so much as she does for Farrington's, we should find it a hard matter to escape the snare. Never was there a more fascinating person where it is her will to please; and I predict that we shall live to see her one of the leading personages of London society."

Lady Louisa protested loudly against such a threat; Frank Bradshaw sneered; and Sir Robert and Lady Greyville looked sublimely

indignant. Nevertheless, Mr. Bradshaw's prophecy, however extravagant in the ears of the Greyvilles, was already in process of accomplishment. A handsome woman, really desirous to please, and gifted with tact and presence of mind, can scarcely fail of acquiring partizans; and not a day passed but the lady of Spring-gardens, the lady whose dinners were so *récherché*, the lady whose bon-mots so renowned, and, above all, the lady who was looked to as the polestar by which the popular and influential Earl of Farrington was supposed to steer his course, readily increased the little busy knot of acquaintance who called themselves her friends.

Lord Farrington's mansion was now the rendezvous of all that was illustrious in the political, literary, or fashionable world. Nothing could equal the splendour and elegance of its appointments—the delicate imagining of its fêtes—the high-bred tone of its circle. To be excluded from its coterie amounted almost to forfeiture of *caste*; to be one of its habitual guests was a sufficient pass-

port to every other house worth entering. The favour of the sovereign, the respect of his coadjutors, the acclamations of the people, united to stamp the new Earl as the first man of his day, and fated to render that day important in the eyes of posterity. Yet, instead of appearing elated by this excess of honour, his unobtrusive and graceful suavity increased in proportion to his elevation in the world; and if Mrs. Clermont grew the fairer for adulation, Lord Farrington assuredly became more courteous,—more considerate,—more generally agreeable. He had, in fact, all the elements of popularity in his character. No one could be more free from egotism or self-conceit; no one could combine a higher tone of refinement with so much simplicity of taste and feeling; no one could be more imbued with the natural obligingness that constitutes the best sort of politeness. Instead of the effort to please occasionally betrayed by Mrs. Clermont, there was a repose about the character and address of Lord Farrington which showed him free from design,—free from arrogance,—from

an undue desire of distinction,—from the over-nice fastidiousness arising from want of sympathy with our fellow creatures. It was plain that, had he been fated to curatize for life at the Tile House, he would have lived and died a good man; it was presumed that, having been called by fortune to the presidency of the thrones and dominions of Downing-street,—he would live and die a great one!

Most people in this world (setting apart the solemn hopes of immortality) may be said to live for some particular circle or society:—the country gentleman for his county,—the London man for his clubs,—the lawyer for his courts,—the intrigant for the Court,—the fashionable beauty for the *beau-monde*,—the evangelical for the controversial tea-drinkings of the saints,—the scribbler for the wire-wove cosmogony of reviews and magazines,—the antiquarian in the dust of ages,—the dandy in the dust of the Parks. But a minister of state realizes more especially Byron's assertion that

Our life is two-fold.

Let him have professed, previous to his acceptance of office, the severity of an anchorite;—let him have supped on roots, and burnt the midnight oil over his studies in the coldest abstraction of meditative apathy;—yet from the moment he swears to devote his energies to the service of his king, his country, and his kind,—he must become a man of fashion! There is no remedy for it. Old, ugly, morose, ill-conditioned,—he must learn to “amble gently in a lady’s chamber;”—study the art of graceful representation;—perfume his grizzly locks;—wear his ribbon with an air;—smile, smirk, and congee in the heated atmosphere of the ball-room;—and bind himself to the golden rack of fashionable frivolity! It is the business of the First Lord of the Treasury to stand well in the eyes of the nation, literally and figuratively. Queens are to be propitiated as well as kings;—princesses as well as princes. So long as at public dinners and regal entertainments the fair creatures of the earth are admitted to mingle with the dark ones, my lord the premier, whose brow is fevered and withered with the cares of public responsi-

bility,—who has scarcely time to adjust his attire with decency, after the weariness of the council chamber or the secretary's bureau,—must mince out paltry gossip to the meretricious beauty smiling beside him; and prove himself as familiarly acquainted with the chicane of May Fair and the intrigues of Almack's, as with those of Congress or the court of St. Petersburg. Little does the unsuspecting politician imagine, while storing his mind with the tough elements of his arid science, how plentifully he shall be hereafter filled with good things;—how much turtle and venison—and what floods of hermitage and bourdeaux, go to the compounding of a popular minister!—"Let us eat and drink,—for to-morrow we go out of office," seems the axiom of public men from Sardanapalus to Canning; and it may accordingly be observed that from the moment an individual becomes inscribed in the list of his Majesty's ministers, the first thing narrated of him in the public prints is the name of his physician. — ("The Lord Chancellor is recovering;—Dr. Bolus, we are happy to state,

has taken leave of his noble patient.”) The public (good easy soul, that most credulous of doting old women) attributes the sufferings of the invalid to the fatigue of official duties; and instead of adverting to the repletion of cabinet dinners or the unaccustomed fever-heat of the gay assemblies peculiar to his grave vocation,—talks only of the labours of the session, and the consequences of a sedentary life.

Seldom, however, does it happen that these lighter ministerial duties devolve upon one so fitted by age and aspect to do them justice, without perilling his life in the attempt, as the Earl of Farrington. His graces of person and address fitted him no less for the ball-room than the cabinet; and though, at the early date of three-and-thirty, he had succeeded in conquering the confidence of the nation, there were other conquests for which he was equally well qualified. Not an artful mother, or flirting matron in London, but laboured to convince him of the fact, and laboured unsuccessfully. The onus of their disappointment was laid to the door of Mrs. Clermont.

If female instinct so far prevailed in Miss Greyville's bosom as to render the abuse of a rival acceptable, she might have been amply gratified by the hints and inuendos, the scandals and accusations, whispered against her sister-in-law's friend, whenever the solemn dignitaries of the Greyville circle were gathered together. Sir Robert and her ladyship were much addicted to heavy dinner parties; and as an interlude to their grave potter respecting the state of public affairs, my Lord Farrington the minister, and Mrs. Clermont the minister's minister, were continually brought under discussion; more particularly when these sober synods were composed of the country neighbours of the Murray and Greyville dynasties.

“And so, ma'am, the old Doctor at Lullingholme is going to be made a dean. To think of some people!—A country schoolmaster!—a man whom really one hardly liked to see at one's table. I wonder how Lord Farrington can commit himself in such an extraordinary way!” cried an elderly spinster one evening at Lady Greyville's whist-table.

“I hear he is a very venerable old man,” observed a fat lady in the corner, who had five younger sons to provide for, and was gradually sidling round to the Clermont faction; “and Lord Farrington’s education is a sufficient testimony to his mental qualifications.”

“Farrington went to Harrow a mere boy,” observed a man of straw in a green riband, who was pursing up his mouth over his hand at whist; “and having run through school with more speed than profit, was sent to Dynington to be crammed till it was time for college. I don’t fancy, however, that he did much there—except make love to Miss Danby. My son tells me he made no figure at Oxford.”

“That must have been his own fault,” said the trimmer, “for it is well known that young Dr. Danby, the present master of ——’s, is one of the most learned men of the day. I sat next him at dinner one day at one of Lord Farrington’s big-wig parties; and I’m sure he did not say a single word I could understand. He was a great deal too far north for my weak capacity.”

“I certainly *do* think,” ejaculated the old lady who first started the subject, “that the way this Mrs. Clermont is courted in society affords a most alarming proof of the laxity of public morals in the age we live in. Who or what is Mrs. Clermont, I should like to know, independent of her connection with Lord Far-
rington; and if she really owes her consequence to that connexion, what are we all about who are seen in her society?”—

“We have no right to make so unjust a conclusion! Mrs. Clermont owes her distinction in society,” observed Captain Rosse (who had been too busy turning over the leaves of Miss Greyville’s sketch book to chime in earlier in the discussion), “to a very handsome face and very attractive manners.”

“And who has a right to object to the society of a woman living on the happiest terms with her husband?—Thanks to the blessing of English law, every one is innocent till proved guilty;”—said the zealous advocate.

“I think a distinction should be made in the gender of the pronoun,” cried the old lady, get-

ting very red. "Legal proof is not always necessary to convince the world that a *woman's* conduct is indecorous and disgusting. Nothing, in fact, is less susceptible of proof; and yet —"

"So long as an honourable man sanctions the conduct of his wife by treating her with respect and affection, she is spotless in the eyes of all reasonable beings," said Rosse.

"More especially a *right* honourable man," sneered Frank Bradshaw, who, hearing the dowagers raising their voices in the dispute, had flown from Antonia's side, hoping to be the bottle-holder in a whist squabble.

"Well, I don't suppose the Clermonts will keep up the farce much longer," said the green ribbon. "There will, probably, be a separation and divorce, and re-marriage, some fine autumn; when all the world is busy pheasant shooting; and then, proof will bring conviction; and, the intrigante anchor herself in an earldom at last."

"One would suppose you thought Mrs. Clermont as great a goose as her neighbours," said Frank Bradshaw, laughing. "Divorce?—No—

no !—*she* at least is wise enough to know that, though our ladies chaste and fair, fly to visit her as Farrington's mistress, not one of them would go near her as Farrington's wife. Doctors' Commons is the true Rubicon of fashionable life."

"Goose or swan," said Rosse, "she is a mighty pleasant woman. The public has nothing to do with her family arrangements; and while Lady Holmebush is to be found in her company, (Lady Holmebush, on whom not even the oldest, ugliest, or most ill-natured prude ventures to cast an imputation,) I fancy we may all permit ourselves to enjoy Mrs. Clermont's passing pleasing tongue without fear of chafing a thin-skinned conscience."

The name of Lady Holmebush was conclusive. The old ladies (green ribbon included) were silenced; but, if they said nothing, they "thought the more;" and it was only natural that their thoughts should revenge themselves upon Mrs. Clermont.

CHAPTER VIII.

So weak are human kind by nature made,
Or to such weakness by their vice betray'd.

YOUNG.

CAPTAIN Rosse reasoned with more good-nature than discrimination. Lady Holmebush was the last person to be trusted in any matter concerning the interests and pleasures of her brother. Although the Lady Helen Murray had become a Marchioness some years previous to the acknowledgement of Berkley's silly entanglement with his tutor's daughter, she had been sufficiently in his confidence to know that he was fondly attached to Anne Danby,—and sufficiently partial to him to give credit to the Anne Danby, so beloved, for every christian virtue and womanly charm. She felt sincere interest for her as the object of her dear Berkley's at-

tachment, and sincere pity as the wife of old Clermont's vulgar son.

There could not be a woman of a more guileless turn of mind. Educated in retirement, she had preserved even to womanhood the most childish simplicity. Having come in contact with nothing base or vitiated, she was without experience, and consequently without faith in the deceits of the world; her mind was as lovely as her person; her heart all tenderness and truth. Happy the man, whose fate and fortunes remove him so far above the necessities of life as to enable him to select a companion so angelic; who, instead of requiring worldly knowledge in his wife, can afford to place a seraph in his bosom, and suffer her to pass through life a gentle dupe to the knaveries of her fellow-creatures!—

“Do you know,” said the Marchioness one day to her husband, shortly after the death of her elder brother, “people are so ill-natured about that charming Mrs. Clermont. Several of my friends assure me that she is still in love with Berkley!”

“Is it likely to be true?” inquired Lord Holmebush, watching her beautiful countenance.

“*True?* I never saw a woman more attached to her husband and children.”

“Does she tell you so?”

“She talks of nothing else. Mrs. Clermont perfectly adores her family!”

“But she is rather light and free in her general conversation?”

“Light and free! You are growing as harsh as the rest of them:—I never knew a more delicate, a more feminine creature!”

“Indeed?—Umph!—all right I see! Well, my dear Nelly, ‘I will take the ghost’s word for a thousand!’” said Lord Holmebush, laughing. “Whatever she chooses to appear to *you*, shall be her true character. I had half determined to beg you would not be too much in Mrs. Clermont’s company; but I see there is nothing to fear. Invite her here, therefore, whenever it suits you; or rather, till you find occasion to alter your opinion.”

Lord Holmebush did not consider that, al-

though it might be politic in Mrs. Clermont to mask herself pretty closely in the society of his modest and amiable wife, the world in general, unaware of the false colours she had assumed, would either blame the Marchioness as a partner in her levity, or accept the forgery at sight on the strength of the Marchioness's endorsement. And such, indeed, was the result of her intimacy at Holmebush House: the strait-laced felt they had no right to cast a stone at a woman leaning on the arm of the pure and virtuous Helen; and Mrs. Clermont was admitted (as the guest of Lady Holmebush) into many a circle which had previously closed itself against her approach.

And soon all doubt—all hesitation on the subject—was felt to be an impertinence. “One sees her every where;—I dined with her at Holmebush House last week,” became a *passé par tout*. Nothing now was perfect without the presence of the lovely Mrs. Clermont. Her dress, her air, her bonmots were unanimously quoted; and Lord Farrington's *engouement* (sanctioned by the unanimous verdict of society)

seemed to grow with what it fed on. All his trust, all his idolatry of the days of the river Dyne, seemed to have returned upon him; his own Anne, was now as fair a “spirit,” and more his “minister,” than ever. Not only had she vindicated herself from every aspersion of Mediterranean scandal, but persuaded him that all her thoughts, words, and deeds, from the moment of their first meeting to their last parting, had been actuated solely by solicitude for *his* welfare. It was to spare *him* a disadvantageous connexion—to recall *him* from America—she had given her hand to young Clermont;—it was to talk and hear of him that she had courted the friendship of the Greyvilles;—it was to forward her husband’s interests, and her own consequent return to England and himself, that she had borne with the tedious Lord High Commissioner.

Who could resist such declarations, breathed by a voice so tuneful,—so beautiful a mouth? With whatever resolutions poor Berkley thought fit to fortify his prudence, she had only

To look in his face till he forgot them all!

till he saw nothing in the wide universe but those melting eyes,—that brilliant countenance, those pearly teeth. The world united to declare that Mrs. Clermont was the handsomest woman on its surface, and for once he was quite of the world's opinion. To be the first, the sole object of adoration to so highly gifted a creature,—a woman who was “all soul,”—whose “soul” was of so high an order, whose notions so sublime, whose language so eloquent, whose looks still more eloquent than her words;—what a climax of triumph for so humble an individual as Berkley Earl of Farrington, first Lord of his Majesty's Treasury, and first favourite of his Majesty's friendship!—

None but the densest of the dull should presume to be wise in his own conceit!—In the face of all the grievous examples furnished to mankind by history and living nature of the frailties of philosophers, and the weaknesses of the wise, Lord Farrington, whose name appeared in capitals in the gazettes of all the capitals in Europe, who held King, Lords, and Commons, in his sleeve, and balanced the constitution of the realm in his right hand, was after all the

dupe of Nancy Danby, the puissant princess of the academic Tile House;—a lady who had conned the elements of universal knowledge on an alphabet of gilt gingerbread, and been instructed in the graces of life by the itinerant jig-master who visited Dynington on occasion of its annual fair!—a lady whom universal London declared to be the most elegant of the daughters of fashion; admiring the high breeding of her address fully as much as the beauty of her person. Nay! even of those who at first opposed her growing innovations and assumptions,—there was but one who still held aloof,—but one who silently misdoubted her excellence,—but one who knew or suspected her real character!

This one (and the exception is easily to be accounted for) was the daughter of Sir Robert Greyville. Antonia, although for Lord Farrington's sake she might advocate the cause of his chosen associate and affect incredulity respecting the nature of their connexion, saw clearly that the worshipped Mrs. Clermont was a mere *intrigante*; that through life she had

rendered Berkley Murray her stepping-stone to preferment; and that her elevation to her present position was a wicked freak of fortune ! At times, in her solitary musings, Miss Greyville was tempted to regard the object of Lord Farrington's firm and fond affection as the most fortunate of human beings; at others she could not but wonder that *any* human being should find enjoyment in so fitful a fever as that of Mrs. Clermont's hazardous triumph. Herself of a gentle and tranquil temperament, she could by no means comprehend the delights attached to the haste, tumult, and toil of pleasure;—the perpetual ascent of the weary mountain of ambition;—the unintermitting strife of planning, plotting, and manœuvring;—the intricacy of machinery which served to move on the sober dial-plate of public life—that dignified hour-hand, his Majesty's minister, and that busy minute-hand, the cunning Mrs. Clermont.

The lady herself, meanwhile, omitted no effort to propitiate the good-will of the Greyville family. Although she had learned from Berkley in his school-days the prodigious intimacy

subsisting between the two families, and from Lady Gertrude, during their Mediterranean friendship, its renewal after young Murray's return from America, she had never cherished the least apprehension of Antonia's influence. She saw that in childhood, girlhood, womanhood, her own star had ever been ascendant; and possessed too much of the self-reliance of genius, to cherish superfluous jealousies. She was aware that persons whose ambition is moulded upon a gigantic scale must not pause to make war upon the straws and pebbles intercepting their progress; and that one of the great secrets of rising in the world, is to overstep petty obstacles without making a parade of the achievement.

And yet, though satisfied she had nothing to fear from Miss Greyville's attractions, she saw that Lord Farrington entertained the truest regard, a regard founded on esteem, for the companion of his youth; and apprehensive that, in a moment of self-examination (such as by an inexplicable association suddenly invoke the phantoms of childhood's pleasures and friendships amid the

haunts of every day life), he should miss the society of the Greyvilles, and blame her as the cause of their estrangement, she hazarded a bold advance to conciliate the friendship of Antonia. But Miss Greyville was all ice,—as cold, as polished, as inaccessible;—receiving every overture with the most chilling courtesy; smiling into silence the laboured sallies of the fashionable *bel-esprit*, and tranquillizing with a calm eye of investigation, all her cajolery and all her grimaces. Vainly did the Clermont develop her repertory of arts!—The taunts of Lady Louisa Marcham could be parried by the readiness of her wit;—the lofty scorn of the dowagers soothed down by delicately ministering to their pride and selfishness;—nay, even the dashing insolence of Frank Bradshaw she had overwhelmed by the magnitude of her influence on society. But what was to be done with Miss Greyville?—How was that imperturbable disposition to be excited,—how was that clear searching eye to be blinded, — how was that dispassionate ear to be deluded? She put forth the most brilliant and sparkling effervescence of her wit;—but An-

tonia smiled courteously, without surrendering one outpost of her cold reserve. She affected sensibility ; and made a profession of fine sentiments and fine feelings that might have deceived Hannah More or Mrs. Trimmer into credulity ;—but Antonia was inexorable. She soared into the “high sublime of deep absurd,” and Madame de Stael might have been dazzled by the glitter of her eloquence ;—but Miss Greyville detected the “true no-meaning,” through all its sonorous verbosity. She became sententious, and Bacon might have inclined his ear to hear ;—but Lord Farrington’s faithful friend despised those moral axioms which so little influenced the conduct of their professor !

Mrs. Clermont was at length piqued and grew flippant. But *persifflage* could not fasten upon the even tenour of Miss Greyville’s simple manners and blameless life. Do what she would—call up what storms from the vasty deep,—draw down what baleful vapours from the moon, or exhale what blistering dew from the fenny field,—there,—there,—bright, lofty, and unextinguishable over her head, shone the one

clear planet whose orbit was appointed of Heaven,—whose sphere a sphere of holiness !

It was in vain that she attempted to obtain from her friend Lady Gertrude, some solution of the enigma, or some insight into the frailties of Miss Greyville's character. For once, the proverb was at fault ;—no enmity existed between the sisters-in-law. Antonia was a right-minded, and the wife of her brother Bob a right-hearted woman ; and there was no mischief to be made out of them or between them. The only thing that Mrs. Clermont could manage to learn to Antonia's disadvantage, was the fact that she was in her thirty-second year ; but even this was an unavailable weapon to a woman who had fully attained her thirty-fifth !

At length, however, a circumstance transpired concerning Miss Greyville, which if it did not gratify the malice, was calculated to excite the utmost alarm of Mrs. Clermont ; and great indeed was her anxiety to prevent its reaching the ears of Lord Farrington. The aged wife of Sir Robert, full of years and respectability, was going down into the grave ; and if one feel-

ing of human weakness blemished the virtue of her parting hours, it was a tincture of bitterness in reviewing the fortunes of Antonia. She had long been reconciled to her son's match by the good humour of Lady Gertrude, and her faithful devotion to Bob the future Baronet. She had long ceased to regard her elder daughter's alliance as a degradation; for, thanks to Lord Farrington's friendship, Dr. Mannington was now a dignitary of the church,—and thanks to her own happier frame of mind, a welcome attendant in her sick chamber. But there was no palliative to smooth down her irritation concerning her youngest daughter. Girls with a quarter her attractions had become duchesses,—with a tithe of her virtues marchionesses,—yet *she* was still a spinster;—and on the decease of her parents, would have nothing to do but to retire to some dreary watering-place, to work worsted rugs, regulate the shooting ideas of some Sunday school, and vegetate through repining maturity to desolate old age. Often and vainly had Lady Greyville set forth the miseries of such a destiny, as arguments to induce her

daughter's acceptance of one among the vast variety of "establishments" laid at her feet; but Antonia laughingly assured her mother that she had a vocation for being an old maid, a tenderness for tabby-cats, and a predilection for the music of the tea-kettle, such as must prevent her uniting herself to my Lord Beechgrove's country seat or presiding over Sir William Threecourse's London dinners.

But when the old lady's anxieties grew stronger with her declining health, when she saw the moment approach for leaving Antonia alone in the world, she became too earnest in her admonitions to be answered with the bantering of raillery. "Antonia!" said she one evening, when the whole family were assembled in her sick room, "this melancholy attendance of yours will soon be at an end; and you, who have been so tender and vigilant a nurse to my infirmities for the last three years, will sadly miss an object on which to bestow your kind attentions."

"My dear mother," exclaimed Miss Greyville, startled by the abruptness of this appeal, and

misdoubting its motive, “do you forget that my father is in constant need of my services;—that my brother and sister —”

“Your brother and sister have homes and interests of their own,” replied Lady Greyville gravely. “I could wish, before my death, to see *you* equally fortunate.” (Antonia turned away, with a painful presentiment of what was coming.) “Captain Rosse has been with me this morning,” resumed the invalid, “to beg my intercession in his favour. I heartily wish it were not needful. Six years ago, when first he made you an offer of his hand, there were circumstances, my dear child,—*recent* circumstances,—to which I could readily attribute your refusal. But you owed to me then, and owed to him, that but for a pre-engaged heart you might have been his;—that his position in the world,—his character, his principles, were all you could desire.”

“And I am sure you can have had no reason to alter your opinion,” interrupted her brother, apprehensive that Lady Greyville would exhaust herself. “Every body allows Rosse to be the

best natured and most honourable man in the world. There is not a fellow in England better spoken of."

"I admit it all," replied Miss Greyville, less apprehensive of vexing her brother than her mother; "nor is there any one I regard more highly. But if I did not wish to marry him six years ago, when I was younger, less fixed in my prejudices, less strong in my own opinions, I should be sorry to become his wife *now*, on a mere plea of eligibility;—for my sentiments are no wise altered respecting himself or others."

She blushed deeply as she uttered this avowal of lingering attachment for one who had so studiously proved his indifference towards her as Lord Farrington. But she had nothing to fear from the interpretation of her companions. There were no Frank Bradshaws, no Lady Louisa Marchams, in the family circle of the Greyvilles.

Fruitless as were the old lady's representations to her daughter of the superiority of a career of active duty, of matron and maternal virtues, over the selfish indolence of mere spin-

sterhood, the last energies of life seemed concentrated in her desire to behold Antonia the wife of a good and honourable husband; and during her last few weeks she actually admitted the faithful admirer of her daughter among the number of her own family.

“ Let me join your hands before I die ! ” said she ;—and the trial was indeed a severe one to her daughter’s constancy.

“ You have been the best of parents,” faltered the trembling Antonia. “ Do not insist on my giving a pledge at this solemn hour, which I should repent at a calmer moment. Why should I hesitate to speak the truth ?—to acknowledge before you all, that my first love will be my last ;—that my heart is as fondly devoted to Lord Farrington as it ever was to Berkley Murray ? ”

“ Hush, child ! ” cried her father, who was seated beside the dying woman, “ why afflict your mother in her last moments ? ”—

“ She has done her duty,” faltered the dying Lady Greyville,—“ God forbid that my last action should be an act of injustice.”

CHAPTER IX.

Who thinks that fortune cannot change her mind
Prepares a dreadful jest for all mankind.
And who stands safest?—Tell me, is it he
That spreads and swells in puff'd prosperity?
Or, blest with little, whose preventing care
In peace provides fit arms against a war.

POPE.

WITH all her lack of faith in human virtue, Mrs Clermont could not but perceive that an attachment such as Antonia Greyville's, a passion coeval with her own existence,—a passion superior to the influence of time, absence, coldness, inconstancy,—to the counter-charm of self-interest, the importunities of other lovers, the reproaches of a father, the intreaties of a dying mother,—was of no common order. The

whole affair indeed was incomprehensible!—She, the gaudy denizen of the world of luxury, accustomed to peruse the superficial lines of fashionable emotions,—to see eternal passions grow and wither with the summer roses, and new attachments spring up among the hot-house flowers of every successive season, was ill qualified to appreciate the temperament and condition of a love of nearly twenty years duration. What could be more weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable, according to her estimate of men and things, than the “needless Alexandrine” of so protracted a sentiment? Short sighted mortal!—was not her own interested ambition of a still more ancient date,—of a still tougher continuance,—of a still more obstinate vitality?—

But, even while affecting (in her discussion of the subject with her friend Lady Gertrude) to despise the self-humiliating constancy of Miss Greyville’s hopeless passion, she was chiefly eager that a hint should not transpire to enlighten Lord Farrington’s mind. Not from any apprehension that her own influence was on the decline;—she had every thing in favour of her

supremacy ; all his friends—all his associates, were *her* friends and associates. He was accustomed to hear nothing of Mrs. Clermont but raptures and ecstasies ; and was not himself of a disposition to espy defects, or seek after blame, in a person belonging to him by so many various ties. Moreover, the intrigante possessed a woman's faith in the magic powers of the toilet ; of which she was an eager as well as a gifted votary. No one dressed so well or so elaborately ; and, though younger beauties and more radiant wits might arise to "pale her ineffectual fires," she felt at least qualified to defy the whole united sex in the arrangement of her curls, and the devising of her ball-dress. Fashion was her hand-maiden as well as her divinity. Nor is it surprising that, as history avouches Napoleon himself to have been chained for years and years to the car of the faded Josephine by the glittering links of this meretricious chain, a budding statesman still within some years of his fortieth, should submit to a similar influence. Lord Farrington gloried in knowing that his *friend* (there was no other name by

be politely designated) was followed by the admiring eyes of all London, whenever she appeared in public;—was written of in the papers, talked of in the coteries;—worshipped by all the men, and envied by all the women. He gloried:—but it was deceived by the conviction that all these trappings of fashion were assumed to do *him* honour;—that she endured publicity in order to be constantly by *his* side;—that she bore patiently for his sake with the importunate homage necessitated by his official career.

But let all men distrust the sentiments of a woman who outrages for their sake the duties of her sex. It may be an unheroic, and even an ungenerous axiom;—but experience proves that the mighty barrier of principle is seldom overleaped, or the laws of female delicacy infringed, except by persons capable of following up that single error by a thousand others. “Gallantry,” says one of the shrewdest of French philosophers, “is usually the least important defect of a woman of gallantry.” With Mrs. Clermont it was less offensive than the leprosy of sordid

ambition which presented men and women to her view only as dupes and victims;—which made her life a plot,—her diversion a stratagem,—her husband a tool,—her lover a stepping stone,—her very children the mere perpetuators of her success. Affection, duty, virtue, were empty sounds in the ears of the cold-blooded and venal *intrigante* !

In point of fact, Mrs. Clermont loved neither father, mother, brother, sister, nor friend. And yet, in the exercise of her passion for intrigue, she had shoved, pushed, hinted, and implored her old father into a silk apron,—her brother into three thousand a-year, Government and Murray preferment; and Betsy (who had married after her kind the apothecary's apprentice of Dynington) into the lady of Dr. Drouse of Chelsea College, with pickings little inferior in extent to those of Samuel. It was an unlucky thing, indeed, for a woman of Mrs. Clermont's turn of mind, that she was issued of so impracticable a generation. Had her brother been a presentable man, or her sister's husband a moderately intelligent one, there was scarcely

a post to which they might not have aspired. But although Roman emperors may have promoted horses to be consuls, and the great autocrat his physician and coachman to be major-generals,—it was quite impossible to make a king's chaplain out of Doctor Samuel Danby, or a king's commissioner out of Doctor Demetrius Drouse.

In her own person, meanwhile, the apex of the pyramid was attained. Anne of Dyrnington, perched on the pinnacle of the temple,—with princes for her guests, queens for her nursing mothers, England for her wash-pot, Ireland whereon to cast her shoe, and Scotland to be glad of her,—might at length be said to have climbed the high top-gallant of her joy. Although she had no visible means of fortune saving the 3,800*l.* per annum accruing to her from her husband's places, her expenditure equalled that of the greatest and richest of her rivals:—for she was an excellent steward;—knew where to pinch and where to play the prodigal;—and enjoyed moreover various little perquisites

of office—of the gathering together of which, officials are alone cognizant. With an income comparatively moderate, the Clermonts lived better, and dressed better than any two people in London. Their two boys were at Eton,—their house, a fashionable caravanserai;—their equipage exquisite;—their style and appointments unexceptionable. But false appearances cannot last for ever.

It is observed of the stuccoed houses of modern times, that, so long as the surface is preserved entire, nothing can be handsomer or more showy. But let a single crack appear, and the whole façade is rapidly peeled off; here, exhibiting the bare brick of the original structure, and there, presenting a mortary mass of the most paltry description. And lo! such was the eventual destiny of the Clermont or Danby dynasty!

In the seventh year of Lord Farrington's reign, just when he seemed seated firmest in the political saddle, the public, in one of its panic fits of perversity, began suddenly to kick against its rider. An opposition Sunday paper was started, expressly to write down his administra-

tion; and the gentry of the press having discovered that a hole in the heart is a very vulnerable part of the human frame on which to establish a raw, Mrs. Clermont was speedily selected as his lordship's weak point. Having seized, bound, and laid bare their victim, they proceeded first to flay, and then to anatomize.

It is amazing what depths of obscurity are to be penetrated by the libel-spinner of political life; an insect which burrows here and insinuates its long proboscis there, till not a nook is left unexplored. The whole history of Dynington was brought to light. "Piscator, or the Angling Premier," furnished a series of sketches and lampoons, the biting accuracy of which soon rendered rouge a superfluous adornment to Mrs. Clermont's face; and pursued Lord Farrington's tingling ears to the very presence of his sovereign. The scratch wig of the old pedagogue,—the chequed apron of his housewife,—Betsy,—and above all, Nancy herself,—were tricked off week after week, in ludicrous masquerade for the gratification of the scandal-loving public. Mrs. Clermont's natural no-

thingness,—her acquired importance,—nay, the exact means by which it had been achieved, were dexterously exhibited Sunday after Sunday, in as many different shapes as the itinerant fan-juggler can conjure out of a folded sheet of paper.

All this was mortifying enough!—Commissioner Clermont had scarcely nerve to show his face in The House, or indeed in any house but his own. People began to look uneasy when addressed by the *intrigante*, to shun her parties, and omit her from their own. And what was incalculably worse, Lord Farrington's popularity once assailed, he soon experienced the inevitable fortune of official men. He was now as elaborately disparaged as he had before been overlauded.—His authority gradually declined;—and his favour, both with the sovereign and the people, seemed withering with the speed of grass cut down in the sunshine.

His lordship became the nontongpaw of every public offence. The unpopular premier was not only asserted to have raised the price of dry goods and tobaccos, but to be the origin of negro

slavery,—to have dispersed an outward-bound fleet by a typhoon,—caused an insurrection in Ireland,—a rebellion in the province of Singapore ;—produced universal smut in the crops of the season,—and a general rot among the cattle in Romney Marsh !—There was no rain or early pease ; and the people accused “ the head of the corrupt ministry : ”—there was no ice in the icehouses, and the ball-givers declared that nothing would go right till there was a change in the administration.

Inexperienced in political reverses, the great man was unduly afflicted by this convulsion fit of public ingratitude. What he said in his wrath of the Athenians, is not to be repeated ; and sad indeed were his lamentations on the subject to his dear Mrs. Clermont, while deprecating the hard unkindness and altered eye of the king his master, and the gradual falling off of divers partizans, his servants. “ The game is up,” cried the high minded Berkley. “ I have lost the confidence of the public ; and my administration shall not be scorned as a burthen,

where once it was courted as a safeguard against national ruin. I will resign."

What a hearing for the *intrigante*!—*Resign!*—Renounce the helm of state,—the dignity of patronage,—the joys of sinecure,—the raptures of perquisites.—*Resign!*—become a mere Earl with twenty thousand per annum;—a contemptible creature with just sufficient to maintain his own state and condition, without so much as a green leaf to throw to those creeping caterpillars, his friends!—*Resign!*—Mrs. Clermont would not hear of such a thing. Was it for *such* a consummation she had clung to him so long and so closely?—

She was, however, obliged to hear of it. All that she could urge respecting the sacrifice of personal feeling indispensable to the true patriot;—all that she could asseverate concerning the hosts of undeclared partizans who, so long as he continued in office, remained quiet and self-secure in the shade;—all that she could describe of the attachment of the people, and the partiality of the people's prince, was of no avail. Lord Farrington, although too noble-minded to

give much credit to the tirades of opposition newspapers or shrink from the hootings of a few ruffians hired to molest him, saw clearly that his public influence was at an end. "Others may perhaps succeed better in pacifying the country," said he. "*My* task is accomplished."

At first Mrs. Clermont parried the announcement of his intentions with remonstrances and flattery; and as he grew firmer in his intentions, tried the influence of irony. "What would the world say of his self-mistrust;—of his want of consistency;—of his moral pusillanimity?"—But on discovering that Lord Farrington's ears were already too excoriated by the sayings of the world to admit of much sensibility towards its further eloquence, she tried her only remaining argument—threw herself on his forbearance, and implored him at least to remember his friends. Alas! good man!—of what else had he been thinking for seven years past?—to what else had he sacrificed his time, inclinations, character, principles?—Raising his beloved Anne from his feet, he entreated that, for once, his

friends would think of *him*, and not increase the perplexities of a most perplexing crisis.

Next to compliance with her entreaties, this was precisely what Mrs. Clermont wanted. She had now an excuse for an indignant rupture of her heart-and-soul or rather heart-and-hand connexion with the falling Cæsar. She expressed herself "hurt;" and saw, or at least resented, an indication of personal blame in Lord Farrington's declaration that "from his boyhood to his ex-premiership, he had been devoted to herself alone." After a parting audience with the king, he retired to Farrington Castle for a few weeks to recruit his flurried spirits and exhausted health; and Mrs. Clermont, for the first time, discreetly forbore to bear him company. She even replied to his long letter of expostulation by a short note, hinting that in their present excited state of feeling it was better they should not meet!

Of Mr. Clermont, all this time, little has been recorded. That he accepted Anne Danby's hand under circumstances so ignominious, was no very advantageous introduction to the reader's

notice;—that he accepted office from the hands of his wife's lover, exhibits only consistency in baseness;—and that he should desert that lover's side during the first onset of the enemy, is a sequel duly to be inferred. He was, in fact, a shrewd active man; born without honour, bred without principle; who, in the ardour of his resolution to rise out of the mud amid which he struggled into life, saw the necessity of becoming casehardened to the oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely, till he should acquire a right to become tyrannical and contumelious in his turn. Having found that there was more to gain by playing the pleasant fellow than by becoming the jack-in-office, he had not attained a sufficient pre-eminence, even at the period of Lord Farrington's dethronement, to throw off the mask. Most people therefore still qualified him as “a devilish clever fellow,” or “a devilish useful man;” and all pitied or affected to pity him for having an extravagant wife, whose follies compelled him to objectionable modes of attaining preferment, and whose temper prevented a due assumption of his

marital authority. One or two indeed called him harsh names, and reviled the meanness of his spirit. But these were the very men who dined oftenest at his table, and profited most largely at second hand by the sins they thought proper to deprecate; and on the whole no one was more regretted by the eating and drinking public, on the dissolution of Lord Farrington's administration, than his dirty doer of dirty jobs, the supple Mr. Thomas Vernon Clermont.

CHAPTER X.

Alike the busy and the gay ,
But flutter through life's little day
In fortune's varying colours drest ;
Touch'd by the hand of rude mischance,
Or chill'd by age, their airy dance
They leave.

GRAY.

It is not to be supposed, however, that a woman worldly-wise in her generation as Mrs. Clermont, was so ignorant of the first principles of her calling as to have been living with political friends as though they were always to be her friends; or her political enemies, as though they were to be her enemies for ever. She was in fact only so far a party-woman as squared with her private interests; and cared no more for the state or its service (setting aside the salary thereunto attached) than for the politics and constitution of Cochin China.

For some time past indeed, (from the moment the first flaw became perceptible on the stuccoed surface of the late administration,) Mrs. Clermont, like an æronaut busy in preparing for a new ascent, had been gradually and silently cutting away the strings which bound her to the old spot. Had any one been sufficiently on the watch to detect the thousand and one manœuvres of her daily life, it must have amused them to note her attempts to “*hedge-off*” in her friendships and acquaintances. She now became philosophical enough to overlook party influence; discovered that women have nothing to do with politics; extended her smiles to both sides of the House as well as to “*both their houses*;” and soon came to be accounted handsomer and more agreeable among the “*outs*” who were soon to be the “*ins*,”—than among the “*ins*” who were soon to be the “*outs*.”—It was noticed that during the last season of Lord Farrington’s administration, she shared her opera box with the lady of a leading opposition lord; and though, till the fatal crisis, she was regarded, by what was termed her *own* party,

as a friend in the enemy's camp, it soon became pretty evident that she had been quite as much of an enemy in their own.

Treachery, political or domestic, is doubly treacherous in a woman. There is something peculiarly base in the consciousness of impunity with which a female traitor fences herself round in her misdoings. The dark sex is amenable to many tribunals; the fair, to one alone. A man is under the jurisdiction of sword, pistol, horsewhip, and axe; a woman may infringe all the laws of honour and probity, with nothing worse than public contempt as the penalty of detection. She cannot be kicked down stairs, or thrown out of a window, or even called opprobrious names. Should she be insulted, however deservedly, husband or brother must defend her at the peril of his life;—be her follies and extravagancies what they may, she is held personally unaccountable for their indecorum. But this very impunity should impart to her public vocation something of the sacred character investing the heralds of old. She should be the bearer of no secret intelligence,

no calumnious reports, no dishonourable proposals. She should scorn to do that, under shelter of her sex, which as a man would render her amenable to the laws of honour.

But the laws of honour are regarded by the *intrigante* as just as easy of evasion as the laws of God. She opposes her cunning to a conventional, and her hardness of heart to a divine tribunal;—lives from hour to hour and day to day, instead of from time to eternity;—and with the assistance of her superficial grace and self-possession, manages to dispense with every characteristic of modesty and discretion. Her sole moral restraint exists in the axiom that “virtue is a clever thing;” that “il n’y a rien de plus *adroit* qu’une conduite irréprochable;” and, but for the market value of a good reputation, would become as lost to shame as she is dead to virtue.

The “adroitness” of Mrs. Clermont had induced her therefore to put some measure on her proceedings; to leave herself a loophole for escape, even as regarded her connection with Lord Farrington. She had done nothing out-

rageous; nothing so bad but that the prudes might affect faith in her innocence, and have an excuse for visiting her as long as they pleased; had never resided at the Castle unless there were other visitors in the house; never travelled thither in the same carriage or on the same day with himself; never dined with him in town without her husband, or received him at her own house except during the hours devoted to general society; and in consequence of these cautions, Satan, at whose shrine she had so scrupulously lighted a taper, stood her friend in time of need. Even those who spoke longest and loudest against Lord Farrington, were of opinion that "it was a great pity poor Clermont should be turned out. Clermont was such a very good fellow—such a very pleasant fellow; his wife so handsome,—his claret so excellent,—his cook so supreme!—Clermont was every body's friend;—had neither said nor done an ill-natured thing during his public career;—his place had never been regarded as a political place, (there could be no occasion for *him* to resign); and it was indispensable to retain a few persons familiar with the forms of public

business, (there could be no occasion for displacing *him*.)—Clermont was too useful to be dispensed with; and could, should, might, or indeed ought to remain in office;—they could not without him;—they could not do without his wife.” Clermont was accordingly solicited to do precisely what he had always intended to do—retain his place; and Mrs. Clermont,—after looking pensive and interesting for a few days, and declaring that the long-standing connection of *her* family with the Murray family, the obligations of her late father to the late Lord Farrington, had hitherto forbidden all demonstration of the real nature of her political views—re-commenced her course of official dinners; and, with the exception of a change of names and faces,—of a new *cast* of the piece,—the farce went on and went off quite as brilliantly as ever!

Meanwhile, it afforded no surprise to Lord Farrington that the day following his arrival at the Castle brought not (as usual) his friend Clermont’s travelling-carriage, nor the post a letter of apology. The high tone of pique assumed towards him by Mrs. Clermont at

parting, convinced him that a quarrel was inevitable;—but he expected that it would prove a *quarrel*—not a rupture. Aware that the Clermonts were mainly dependent on official emolument, he could make due allowance for the angry feelings of a mother who saw the bread taken from the lips of her children. But he trusted the little Clermonts would feed upon his own plum-cake; and that his beloved Anne would soon cease to regret the crumbs of office. His beloved Anne, however, saw things with the eye of society, not with the eye of sentiment. She knew full well that she might still command the house and establishment of her former lover; but she also knew that, unsupported by the charm of ministerial influence, such a connection would be rated at its real value. There was no longer the apology of a political connection between her lover and her husband to extenuate their familiarity; no longer the stir and publicity of official life to bring them together. She had been always called the bosom friend of the First Lord of the Treasury; but she would most assuredly be termed the

mistress of the lord of Farrington Castle! A rupture therefore was indispensable. A cant phrase adroitly circulated, that "Lord Farrington had sacrificed his friends in the most unhandsome and unheard-of manner," afforded an apology to such of his friends as chose to be his friends no longer.

Now although Lord Farrington anticipated a temporary alienation, he had not prepared himself for this; and a drop of bitterness was thereby added to his cup, which destroyed the crystalline purity he had expected in filling it anew from the well-spring of nature. In descending to the level plain of private life, he prepared, of course, to view surrounding objects in an altered point of view; but he had not expected to find himself surrounded by the medium of a distempered atmosphere. He felt that the tenour of his life should have secured him from such black ingratitude; and it was curious enough that at the moment he was looking for public mortifications, his chief grievance proved of a private nature.

Newspaper after newspaper, letter after letter, served to enlighten his mind and perfect his astonishment. His own familiar friend—his better self—his moral shadow;—*she* to prove haggard—she to desert, betray, insult, deride him!—Like Othello, his comfort was now to loathe her!—But what a comfort for a man of Lord Farrington's keen sensibility and noble nature!—

He now discovered (while, absorbed in solitary musing he slowly paced the lofty beech-groves of Farrington,) that he never was qualified for public life;—and perhaps he was right. “Keen sensibility” and “a noble nature” do very little towards the composition of an official man, except in the article of oratory; and eloquence is, after all, a minor accomplishment in a statesman. Lord Farrington was not born to become a great man. He wanted many of the qualities requisite to such an achievement. He had talents, but no application;—energy, but no perseverance;—a high sense of moral and political justice, but no toleration for trivial wrongs in the accomplishment of the

general good. His calculations were on a small scale. He could not bring himself to believe that there is a moral code for the minister and a moral code for the man; he disdained to do evil that good might come; and attempted to frame the scales of Justice of pure and virgin gold. The politicians scoffed at him as a theorist; the debaters called him a declaimer; the matter-of-fact men, a Utopian. The king found him an inconvenient servant; the country an embarrassing master. The element was too pure—too lucid: no fish could live in it, and no plants, sprinkled with its chilling waters, were seen to thrive:—a little mud and a few weeds were voted requisite for the nourishment of the scaly fry, and their protection against poachers. There is a phrase current in the world, that “such a one is no better than he should be.”—Now in political life it is accounted a great *blunder* to be better than one should be!—The only question is to determine the exact proportions of goodness consistent with public duty; or rather, to define the degree of frailty which constitutes a good minister,

without necessitating the disrepute of being a bad man.

Lord Farrington's successor was a very good minister, and therefore a very *great* man;—a man of sound principles, statesmanlike demeanour, unswerving purpose, lofty tone, general knowledge, universal influence. The public journals uttered columns of prose in his honour; and at length turned him over to history to make an example to future generations. What had the public journals to do with his private peccadilloes?—What had history to do with his paltry intrigue with the Clermonts and their faction?—It was his task to

Ride on the whirlwind and direct the storm ;
and he judged it beneath his dignity to inquire what little farthing candles had been puffed out by certain paltry gusts of wind, with which he disdained to interfere.

The result of this contrast with Lord Farrington's lucent purity of principle was not advantageous. Lord F's administration had been blest or cursed with no giants to contend with in the political arena; and very little renown is to be

gained by the far more difficult feat of quelling and enchaining myriads of pigmies. On coming into office, he found no foreign adversary sword in hand; or, as is termed, “in a menacing attitude;” and no glory is to be won by *keeping* things, instead of *making* them *quiet*. He had no conquests—no new alliances to boast of; and to have maintained the peace of Europe throughout a variety of arduous negotiations,—to have supported the dignity of the country without expenditure of blood or treasure,—afforded no grand feature to his government, such as his partizans could bring forward in reply to the grumblers of the press. His enemies called him a feeble minister because he had done no harm;—and “the milk-and-water administration” was the least malicious of the designations lavished by friend and foe, in print and manuscript, public and private, on the cabinet which had recently crumbled to pieces. The only real blot upon its virgin page passed unnoticed. No one had a thought or word of blame to throw away on the female ascendancy which imparted its peculiar character. Nay!

some were even heard to say that, had the Clermonts exercised more influence, things would have gone better in Downing-street. From the Land's End to Berwick-upon-Tweed all were of opinion that they could not have gone worse !

CHAPTER XI.

Earthly greatness is a nice thing; and requires so much chariness in the management, as the contentment of it cannot requite.

HALL.

ONE person at least among Lord Farrington's numerous kinsfolk and acquaintance, rejoiced with sincerity in his release from the thralldom of public business; and this was the Marchioness of Holmebush. *She* had nothing to gain from his interest—much to lose in his estrangement from her company: and great indeed was the satisfaction she experienced in visiting Farrington Castle for the first time since his accession to its throne, undisturbed in her sisterly communion by the tumult of the holiday coteries and official cabals. Although

warmly interested in Mrs. Clermont's behalf, she was glad, for once, to dispense even with *her* ; that she might at last feel at home in her old house, and become once more Helen to her dear Berkley, unscared into "your lordship" and "your ladyship" by the pride, pomp, and circumstance of public private life.

Lord Holmebush, by whom she was accompanied in this sisterly pilgrimage of love (or as the world chose to regard it of condolence), was scarcely less gratified than the marchioness to find the rabble rout of officials, on which he was accustomed to bestow the appellation of "Farrington's pack," dislodged from their kennel. He was a wayward wilful humourist; somewhat too apt to look upon the powers that be, as historical personages ; and to discourse of their *gestes et faits* as impartially as though he were describing the feats of Charlemagne or Henry VIII. He was not only shrewd enough to see men and things as they are, but to define them with as much frankness as accuracy. There were one or two adjectives, which he never scrupled to prefix to the patronymic of Com-

missioner Clermont, even in presence of his brother-in-law ; and as to the wife,—not even the Sunday newspaper spoke more plainly !

But no sooner were his predictions fulfilled, —no sooner did Anne of Dynington throw off her disguise of the lamb's skin and display the jaws and claws of the wolf, than all his malice ended in mirth ; and every fresh evidence of her baseness, brought down by the daily papers and daily post, served only to aggravate his laughter. Assuming to himself the privilege of parliamentary language, a significant “ Oh ! ” was his sole response to Lady Holmebush's varied expressions of wonder that Mrs. Clermont should like to enter the old house in Downing-street as the guest of dear Farrington's successor ;—or that she could make up her mind to dine with the Duke of Datchet, or sup with Lord Subpoena, by whose plots and counter-plots dear Farrington had been forced out of office.

“ The Clermonts have accepted a sinecure in the Privy-Seal Office for their youngest boy, who is at Eton ! ”—said her ladyship, glancing

over the columns of the Morning Herald. "They say she never rested till she had tormented it out of Lord Lumber, with whose brother she was so intimate at Malta."

"Oh!"

"I was looking last night in the library for the fine edition of Grammont which my father enriched with marginal notes, and of which we were all so fond. But Mr. Folio the chaplain, assures me Mrs. Clermont borrowed it three Christmases ago, and has always forgotten to return it."

"Oh!"

"And, would you believe it, my dear Holmebush?—Farrington has actually presented his friend Clermont with that fine portrait of himself by Lawrence, which I so much wished to have; and accepted a tawdry miniature of Mrs. Clermont by Mrs. Mee, to hang in the gallery in its place."

"Oh!"

"And those Dresden jars, which used to stand in my mother's dressing-room, presented by my grandfather at my christening. The

housekeeper assures me they were packed up by Mrs. Clermont's maid and sent off to Spring-gardens last autumn. Now pray don't cry 'oh !' again.—Satisfy me by saying, what I am sure you are thinking, that Mrs. Clermont ought to have looked more narrowly after the proceedings of her servants in another person's house."

Lord Holmebush now indulged in an uncontrollable fit of laughter. Few things amused him more than the naïveté of his wife ; and never had he seen it more largely taxed than by the audacious innovations of the Clermont family.

"Well, my dear Helen," cried he at last, "we may thank the ruling planet of the house of Murray, that poor Farrington has been turned out of office while there is yet a chair or table left in his house. Two years longer, and the Clermonts would in all probability have reduced him to bare walls."

"Why surely you do not suppose—"

"*Suppose ?*—I suppose nothing. It is enough to observe what really *is*, and to know that

‘whatever is, is wrong!’ without stretching one’s imagination to a higher pitch of depravity.”

“Oh! fie, — you always say so much more than you intend, that—”

“Pardon me! you have no conception of the enormousness and enormity of my intentions on this occasion. In the first place, I mean to say that Clermont’s wife is—— Well,—well!—don’t look so shocked. I promise not to breathe another syllable respecting her during our stay at Farrington; but it is on condition that you afford me a better subject of conversation. During our week’s *tête-à-tête*, your brother and I have exhausted even the Heidelberg tun of politics,—set it on the tilt, and waded through its filthiest lees. We have abused every thing and every body; and since we came here, ‘damns’ have not only ‘had their day,’ but their night. Now tell me;—don’t you think you could vary the scene by inviting over Bob Greyville and his wife?”—

“That Lady Gertrude is such a wonderful favourite of yours!”

“*Whatever* that woman may be, or to whom-

soever, *must* be 'wonderful:—she has not the faculty of doing, saying, or thinking any thing like any one else. But were she indeed a favourite of mine, it would be more wonderful than all the rest; for I should favour her in spite of my feelings and my principles."

"It is now my turn to cry 'OH!'"

"Cry nothing, Nelly, an thou lovest me. The thought of a crying face upon those fair shoulders would—but to return to the Greyvilles!—I want you, if possible, to get them here; because, ever since the old Baronet's death (he did not long survive his larger half), I understand that charming girl Antonia has been residing with her brother and Lady Gertrude."

"You seem to be in the secret of all their family affairs."

"Am I?—I should not have thought that a family with Lady Gertrude Greyville at its head could possibly *have* a secret. I am acquainted only with one—that Miss Greyville has been devotedly in love with Farrington any time these twenty years: and unless you manage to

bring the old couple together, poor Antonia will grow grey in her attachment, and—”

“ Antonia!—Antonia Greyville in love with Berkley?—My dear Holmebush! what penetration!—you discover every thing!—With the exception of my brother, there is no one equal to you!”

“ In this case, however, none but myself can be my parallel!—With all Farrington’s sagacity, he has never yet had wit to discover the unacknowledged passion of his old playmate. Or if really aware of it, the Clermont has made a greater fool of him than I imagined.”

“ Holmebush,—Holmebush!”

“ But fool or philosopher, the bucket has at last touched the bottom of the well, and is on the rise again.”

“ And you think—”

“ That you must bring Antonia to the Castle: and, sand-blind as Berkley is, *I* will undertake to *couch* him. You have no idea how skilfully I shall operate!—It will serve to amuse me; for, to say the truth, I have been desperately bored during the last two days.”

“ I have the greatest reliance on Antonia’s merits; nor is there a woman on earth I should so much like for a sister-in-law. But I remember Frank Bradshaw always used to declare that—”

“ Hush, hush !—never venture to quote my friend Bradshaw in the country. Frank is an unimpeachable authority exactly so far as the Hammersmith turnpike, but no further. I doubt whether I should have any reliance on him even at Richmond; and at Teddington, I should as soon think of avouching my word by that of Philip Quarll.”

“ What nonsense you talk ! ”

“ It is at least as good as his, which you seem to think worth remembering and repeating. And now sit down, like a good girl, and write a pretty letter to the Greyvilles. We won’t say a word on the subject to poor Farrington. It shall be quite a surprise to him when he sees them drive into the court-yard.”

A surprise it certainly was, and far from an agreeable one. From the present Sir Robert Greyville, the ex-minister had been unavoidably

estranged since the return of Mrs. Clermont from the Mediterranean; and Lady Gertrude was a woman whose frivolity of speech and character rendered her a most unsuitable companion, except in the giddy circles in which she was accustomed to move. Although the hereditary hospitality of the house of Murray was taxed to do them honour,—although Lord Farrington received them with all imaginable courtesy,—he was no less anxious to discover why they had been invited at all, than why they had accepted the invitation. It was at least some relief that Antonia had declined the visit. Nothing would have embarrassed him more than to receive her as a guest; and while he ventured to impute her alleged indisposition to the same feelings of disdain which kept so many of his friends aloof,—it afforded him comfort that the woman he had used so unworthily, proved as selfish and interested as the rest of the world.

Besides, it would have perplexed him beyond measure, had Miss Greyville's eyes been fixed upon his face while Lady Gertrude was inces-

santly bringing forward the new honours of her friends Sir Thomas and Lady Clermont; challenging *him* with having thrown them off, and glorying in their present indemnification. Lord Holmebush seemed maliciously intent on inciting her to render them and herself ridiculous; but it was a spontaneous effort of her own bad taste which at length induced her to attack him on the subject of Miss Greyville. Although, as she observed, there were none present but friends, Lord Farrington judged it unnecessary she should inform him how her arguments and influence were at length triumphant with her sister-in-law.

“We are just setting off on a tour through Italy,” said Lady Gertrude, as soon as she could get her husband out of hearing, “and before we return to England, Antonia will become Mrs. Rosse.”

“Does Rosse accompany you?” asked Lord Holmebush hastily.

“Of course!”

“Then all is over for Farrington,” cried he,

leading Helen away from the spot ; “ and he deserves it !—What right has a man to look forward to domestic happiness, who has thrown away his best years on the society of an *intrigante* ! ”

CHAPTER XII.

The great end of prudence is to give cheerfulness to those hours which splendour cannot gild and acclamation cannot exhilarate ;—those intervals in which a great man shrinks to his natural dimensions. JOHNSON.

LORD Farrington, although pre-assured of the dulness by which he should be overwhelmed when alone at the Castle,—of the “craving void left aching in his breast,” by the absence of all he had so long been loving,—could not be induced by his sister to accompany her to Lord Holm-bush’s seat in Ireland. It was so long since he had ventured on absolute solitude, that he was curious to put his spirit to the test.—He tried to persuade himself that he had a taste for rural economy ;—read Bacon, fancied he was fond of gillyflowers and of setting out “dainty

flower gardens ;” and bewildered himself with theories of the picturesque,—the day-dreams of Shenstone, Gilpin, Repton, Capability Brown, and Picturesque Price,—till his mind became a mighty chaos of clumps, foregrounds, middle distances, ærial perspective, and terrene diversification.

But it would not do !—He who would derive his happiness from the loveliness of the face of nature, must begin with the face of nature. The excitement to be derived from “the pomp of groves and garniture of fields,” becomes insufficient to a man who for five long years has been commanding the applause of listening senates ; and presents too pure, too single, and perhaps too physical an enjoyment. A habit of addressing himself to and calculating upon the passions and weakness of his fellow-creatures, creates an artificial, or as it is termed a philosophical turn of mind ; and with all the littleness of human greatness, the man of cities unwittingly learns to despise the unsophisticated surface of the earth, when nothing intervenes betwixt its beauty and the approving smiles of Heaven.

“It is a glorious sight!” exclaimed Lord F. when he saw the sun rise, for the first time since his boyhood, over the magnificent valley commanded by Farrington Castle;—and having gazed at it till he was tired, he turned into the library and threw himself on a sofa to read Machiavel.—“’Tis a more gorgeous spectacle than a coronation!” cried he, when he beheld it set again in all its regal splendour of purple and gold; and he crept into the boudoir that had been fitted up for Mrs. Clermont, and began to turn over the luxurious pages of *Lalla Rookh*. He was already woefully weary of his own company; yet dreaded to invite to his house any portion of the babbling throng from which he had escaped, lest he should find himself impounded once more within the paltry barriers of political life. Friends, properly so called, he had none. In his boyhood, his attachment to Anne Danby,—in his latter years, his infatuation to the Clermonts,—had prevented his forming any of those happy and happy-making connexions, which humanize the lofty, and exalt the lowly-minded. His friendships were at best

political *liaisons* sealed by the bond of common office.

In his whole career, whether prospectively or retrospectively considered—whether affording projects for the future or memories of the past—there was nothing solid, nothing cheering. He had not a single gratifying remembrance wherewith to brighten the monotony of riding from Farrington Thicket to Farrington Forest;—or the still drearier dulness of pacing from the saloon to the dining-room—staring at hangings of blue damask, or green velvet;—casting his eyes over old books which he knew by heart, or new ones which fretted his very soul by their frivolous inanity. He had been too long accustomed to the crush of levees,—the ardour of petitioners,—the intensity of eloquence,—the excitement of diplomatizing with foreign cabinets,—to be amused by the schemes of his attorney, the projects of his landsteward, or the intrigues of his cabinet council of the audit-room. He had attained even now but his fortieth year; and having devoted to public business those sunshiny days which form the appropriate season of pleasure,

his heart still possessed a treasury of unexplored wealth, to the existence of which he had been blinded by his illicit connexion with Mrs. Clermont. But these emotions were very unlikely to be called into action during his dull autocracy of the Castle. A sense of mental weariness was the only novel sensation that dawned upon him. He became daily and hourly more conscious that he was bored to death; and even found leisure to regret that his stupid old playfellow Sir Robert Greyville, and his stupid old playfellow's giddy wife Lady Gertrude, had again discovered that the air of England was too harsh for their constitution. About *Miss Greyville* he thought nothing. He doubted whether such a person were still in existence; and had no interest to bestow on the wife of Captain Rosse.

The summer was already gone! London must be as complete a blank as the Castle, and he had no remedy but to visit Paris or some English watering place, by way of getting rid of himself. But this was a forfeiture of dignity to

which Lord Farrington could hardly yet condescend. Habituated

To stupid starers, and to loud huzzas,
he shrank from the publicity he anticipated as inevitable in either of these alternatives; and imagined that, like Pope's Lord Oxford, he might vainly retreat to deserts to escape the wondering gaze of the multitude. It needed time to prove that the mobs which had been wont to obstruct his passage were assembled by the minister, not the man; and that, having fairly hooted and pelted him out of office, the public had every disposition to allow him to take his morning's ride or morning's saunter, without molestation, any where between Mile-end and Marylebone.

At length relief appeared in the shape of a pressing invitation from a certain Lord Farebrother who lived some sixteen miles off, at the extremity of his own county: who, having five gaunt spinsters to dispose of, chose to consider, or call himself, a country-neighbour. Farebrother was too much of a private to be a public politician. The difficulty of bringing

up a cawing brood of half-fledged honourables on a moderate fortune, supplied him with a course of domestic economy, which rendered the species of economy high political a very superfluous study. His own home department occupied all his attention; and Farebrother House was the only house whose debates were interesting in his ears. In such a household, Lord Farrington felt at least secure from having to fight all the battles of his administration o'er again; and with the apprehension of nothing worse than a battue, a billiard-table, and Beethoven's duets, took his departure for a neighbourly visit, which, in France would be considered *un voyage à faire signer ses dispositions testamentaires*.

Unworldly as he had ever been and still was (the nature of his career as a minister of state and as the pupil of Mrs. Clermont considered), it certainly did glance into his lordship's mind that the abundance of Farebrother spinsters was in some degree the motive of his invitation. He knew the world was beginning to wonder he did not marry: and that even in the obscu-

rity of his private life, even as an Earl of moderate date with an income of only twenty thousand per annum, he might be considered what in the polite circles is termed “a very eligible connexion” and among the ladies’ maids “a great catch,” for one of the Pleiades of Farebrother Hall. But Lord F. the father, kept so vile an inference studiously out of view;—talking to the ex-minister solely of gratitude for assistance rendered him in Parliament in the herculean labours of turning an offensive turnpike-road, which, in former summers, had peppered the made-dishes of the Hall with the dust of the mail-coaches and post-chaises;—and apart, and with a sly wink to his country neighbours, who were aware that he had two honourable dunces in the church, of the value of Lullingholme and other livings in the gift of the Murray family. Lord Farrington meanwhile uttered nothing either to his host or the country neighbours respecting *his* object in the visit. But he said to himself, and reiterated the asseveration after the five ugly Miss Farebrothers had passed in review before him, that it “would be somewhat diffi-

cult to touch a heart like *his*, accustomed for years to the wit and beauty of Mrs. Clermont, and the good sense and moral excellence of Antonia Greyville.”—Poor Antonia Greyville ! he had not talked to himself about *her* for some years before.—

But a cursory view of the five young ladies was a moderate dose to be administered to a bachelor Earl :—Lord Farrington found his destinies otherwise appointed. He had been invited there to marry one of them ; and he must be rendered sensible of and if possible sensitive to the magnitude and variety of their accomplishments. Helen, the eldest, had been intended by name and nature for a beauty. Her features were finely formed, and kept together with much concord till she grew to woman’s estate ; when some species of face-quake had induced a singular dilapidation of countenance. She had therefore been set up as the “superior young woman” of the family,—to talk sensible to the county members and widowers, and dragonize the junior branches. Jane, the second, was a daughter of Anak and an Amazon ; shot

flying, rough-rode her father's colts, and could land a pike of four-and-twenty pounds from the Farebrother milldam, single handed. Mary, the third, was a musical genius: Clara a natural philosopher, an impaler of butterflies and beetles: and Adelaide,—a very good little girl, and a dumbmy.

The mother of so hopeful a progeny was a woman whom most people called “poor Lady Farebrother;” but,—as she had an easy good natured husband, and had lost only five of the nineteen sons and daughters recorded of her in the Peerage,—it is difficult to know to what to attribute the world's compassion, unless that she had been living for five-and-twenty years upon Seidlitz powders and caudle,—the apothecary's horse a daily visitation at her gates, one or two teething babes successively squalling in the nursery,—the medicine chest always open,—and the vapour of bread and milk pervading one wing of the house. Her ladyship was generally announced to be “as well as could be expected,”—in spite of a very bilious complexion to justify the pity of her friends and neighbours;

—and during Lord Farrington's visit he saw her only from the lawn, standing at one of her dressing-room windows wrapt in a shawl; and resembling in stature and complexion, the wife of Lot after her transformation.

Society such as this was far more insupportable than solitude to the accomplished Farrington. Nothing but excess of good-nature or good-breeding got him through a couple of days without the pretended arrival of a letter of business to tear him from the bosom of the charming family; when lo! on the third day Miss Helen, well tutored for the effort, astounded him with sundry long quotations from a pamphlet, written by a member of his party, in defence of the Farrington administration!—His lordship was startled,—captivated,—soothed,—surprised. He was not aware how much could be said (and how well said) in his honour. Nor did a perusal of the spirited performance lessen his wonder and admiration. Brougham could not have reasoned more powerfully—Jeffrey investigated the subject more acutely—or Macaulay pleaded his cause more eloquently. But the pamphleteer

was evidently some person familiarly acquainted with his character, birth, parentage, and education. His heart thrilled within him in suggesting the name of Lady Clermont!—The ability displayed in the performance was no longer a matter of wonder. Anne—his own Anne—was equal to any thing; could out-argue Brougham, — out-fence Jeffrey, — out-declaim Macaulay:—Anne had the wisdom of the serpent with the guilelessness of the dove! And this was the woman he had misjudged, reviled, maligned; —this the friend he had misdoubted! Fool that he was! Appearances had been alone against her; and he now saw clearly that she had been mining and countermining in his favour, though compelled to assume the enemy's colours.

The letter addressed by Lord Farrington to Lady Clermont, on this suggestion, was dictated by the impulses of a noble spirit. He implored her pardon as humbly as if he had really done amiss; returned thanks for her unmerited goodness, as if he had really reason to be thankful; and perhaps, had Lady Clermont received the

eloquent missive as it was written, in silence and solitude, her feelings might have been touched by Lord Farrington's credulous generosity. But, unluckily, the tender epistle was forwarded from Spring-gardens to Milford Park, (the residence of the new premier, with whom she was passing the holidays, accompanied by the rabble-rout which formerly enacted Chorus in the dramas of Farrington Castle;) — and the name of “Farrington” on the frank having betrayed the secret of their correspondence, her ladyship saw clearly that it would afford a sacrifice of propitiation to her new idols to admit them into the secret. The letter, accordingly, was publicly recited,—publicly derided;—and Lady Clermont deigned to gratify their curiosity by pointing out to their admiration the unlimited scorn which sparkled throughout the dozen lines of which her answer was composed!

“The flimsy production,” she observed, “which his lordship had done her the very unnecessary honour of attributing to her pen, was generally believed to be the performance of

Miss Greyville, now in Italy, and on the point of marriage with her cousin, Captain Rosse."

She did not think it necessary to add that, if not the author, she was at least the *origin* of the defence, by the calumnies she had assisted to put in circulation. Perhaps, indeed, Lady Clermont mistook or forgot the whole occurrence? —

New-made honour doth forget men's claims ;
and " SIR THOMAS VERNON CLERMONT, BARONET, of Oaklands Park, in the County of Sussex," had been gazetted the preceding Tuesday as one of the LORDS OF HIS MAJESTY'S TREASURY ! —

CHAPTER XIII.

A soul so calm, it knew not ebbs or flows,
Which Passion could but curl, not discompose ;—
A female softness with a manly mind !

DRYDEN.

THE Farebrothers, having founded vast expectations on the grateful courtesy with which their noble guest rewarded the intelligence so unwittingly imparted by the erudite Helen, were somewhat surprised at the precipitation with which Lord Farrington now took his departure for London. Entertaining the opinion of most persons of their caste, that nothing is to be done in the metropolis between the months of July and March, they regarded his pretext of “business” as a mysterious subterfuge. They had no reason to conjecture that

he was about to resign his affairs into the hands of his auditor, procure a cabinet passport for Italy, and fly for ever from an ungrateful country. The pamphlet had assured them that no man had ever greater cause than the ex-premier to loathe and despise the ingratitude of the Great British public;—but they did not dream that (like Coriolanus) he would indulge his spleen by banishing its Senate, and renouncing all fellowship with its citizens.

It may be doubted, however, whether the political world held much influence over the proceedings of the Earl of Farrington. Avoiding the coteries of Paris, which teemed with his partizans, he hastened resolutely on towards the

Antiche mura ch' ancor teme ed ama
E trema il mondo, quando si rimembra
Del tempo andato. —

He had already determined to winter in the Eternal City, — the subject of so much eternal prose and immortal poetry;—and the first incident that produced any sensation in his mind, in the course of his solitary journey, was the sight of an hotel register presented to him

at his Genevan *auberge*, for the inscription of his illustrious name and line of march,—wherein the announcement of “Captain and Mrs. Rosse, to Paris, from the villa of Sir Robert Greyville, Benogna near Como,” stood as conspicuous as the text-hand of the courier could make it.—It was observed by the *aubergiste* that his lordship sent away his dinner untouched; and by his servants that he passed the night in pacing the apartment.

The intelligence thus unexpectedly conveyed had, in fact, given rise to a startling train of reflections; conjuring up before him the predilections of his childhood, the follies of his youth, the fickleness of his maturity, the madness of his manhood. He recalled to mind the endearment of the little Antonia;—the blandishments of the artful Anne of Dynington;—the mild forbearance with which Miss Greyville had welcomed him back to her friendship in the onset of his official career;—the bold but artful tact with which Mrs. Clermont had manœuvred herself anew into his confidence;—the calm and steady regard with which his earlier friend had

watched the progress of his public life, extenuating its errors, appreciating its nobler motives, glorying in its triumphs, and covering its defeat ; —the baseness with which Lady Clermont had fled from his side, and abjured his party in the hour of danger ; and finally, the generosity with which the woman with whose affections he had trifled,—whose youth he had condemned to wither in cold abandonment,—had stepped forward in his defence, rebutting the charges concocted by his former treacherous associates, with all the force of her strong mind—all the warmth of her glowing heart !

Was it surprising that he should turn from the image of the resplendent, worshipped, worshipping lady of the Lord of the Treasury, to the obscure and gracious shadow of the neglected Mrs. Rosse ? — *Mrs. Rosse* ! — a wife, not only by the grace of Heaven, but by the unparalleled, the unpardonable, the inexplicable, the infatuated, neglect of the Right Hon. Berkley Earl of Farrington ! — In the first paroxysm of his irritation, he determined to pursue his journey (with a speed

setting reflection and lamentation at defiance) to the South of Europe, the North of Africa, Egypt, Abyssinia, Timbuctoo,—no matter where, or wherefore!—But the exhaustion consequent on over-excitement soon reduced his projects to a more sober vein. Sadness crept over him as he lay reclined in the corner of his calèche; and he determining to visit Como, and learn from Lady Gertrude all that *could* be learned to nourish his regrets and crown his confusion.

The warmth of her ladyship's reception, and her entreaties that he would take up his abode in the beautiful villa they inhabited on the borders of the Lake, satisfied him that he had done wisely, if not too well. Lady Gertrude was all ecstasies;—full of rapturous inquiries about dear Greyville Park;—a spot she took care to run away from, on every convenient opportunity: and her own beloved Tracy Hall;—which, when residing in England, she regarded much as an insolvent debtor regards the Fleet Prison.

“Oh! if you had but persuaded Frank Bradshaw to come with you. Poor Frank must miss

us sadly!—He use to stay with us for months and months at a time!”

“ Frank has always some reigning friend with whom he stays months and months at a time. Believe me, he has not left himself unprovided.”

“ Well, don’t tell me about it till Sir Robert comes in; for I’m sure it will be a satisfaction to him to learn that Frank does not miss Greyville Park. But, dearest Lord Farrington,—*is* it—*can* it be true —that Lady Clermont is such a favourite with the new Court?—That she now sets up for *proper*, just as in your time she used to set up for *blue*;—and that nothing has ever equalled her influence, and fashion, and all that?”—

“ If public report may be credited, quite true. But I have been living quietly in the country ever since you quitted England, and know nothing that is going on in the great world.”

“ Dear!—how provoking!—I wanted to know whether Lady Clermont *really* had three Royal Dukes at her last archery-meeting at Oaklands;

and whether that Austrian Archduke who was in London last season did *really* say that there were two Queens in England, her Majesty of St. James's, and her Majesty of St. Fashion?"—

“The newspapers, at least, said so for him; and Lady Clermont is reported to have appropriated the compliment.”

“But *do* tell me;—you came by Geneva!—Surely you must have met the Rosses?”—

“I missed them by a day or two.”

“Were you not very much surprized to hear of the match?”

“Not particularly so. I—”

“Ay!” cried Lady Gertrude, with a sigh, “*you*, perhaps, were inclined to be glad,—but *I*—I who once formed such very different projects,—you may guess whether *I* had reason to be pleased! Well—don't let us talk of it! I never saw poor Sir Robert so put out in my life! Pray oblige me by not mentioning the subject before him. He is so angry with Antonia.”

“Certainly not, if you desire it.”

“And there he is!”—cried Lady Gertrude,

applying her eye to a telescope that stood on her work-table, directed towards the bright expanse of the lake that gleamed at the foot of the shrubberies of Villa Benogna: "Come with me to the landing-stairs, and we will surprise them."

Lady Gertrude had previously announced to her guest that Sir Robert Greyville, and two or three Milanese friends, his visitors, were gone on a sailing expedition to Como; and seizing Lord Farrington's arm, she now tripped down the marble steps leading from terrace to terrace of the beautiful garden.—He had no time to admire the espaliers of orange-trees in full-bearing,—the vases of aloes and box-trees,—the statues standing out in glimmering whiteness amid thickets of green myrtle. He had no leisure to inhale the musky fragrance characteristic of Italian gardens,—or to listen to the cool splash of the waters against the little quay.

From the highest terrace they had discerned the skiff, nearing the little bay which was fringed round with the plantations of Villa Benogna; and with a listless heart, Lord Farrington waited upon the guidance of Lady Ger-

trude, his mind pre-occupied by the idea that Antonia and her lover had wandered among those beautiful shades,—that the flowers blooming around him had imparted sweetness and loveliness to *their* bridal hours,—that those marble terraces had echoed back the whispers of their mutual vows. A sudden opening in the thickets of ilex they were traversing, brought them to the edge of the water; and it was no trifling triumph to Lady Gertrude to hear the exclamation of delighted surprise with which her companion gazed on the white sails of the felucca, as it lay anchored in the dark-blue waters rippling at their feet.

Lord Farrington's surprise was great indeed; for his face grew white as death when the first object that struck his eyes on the deck of the little vessel was the figure of Mrs. Rosse, leaning upon her brother's arm. The bridegroom was not there. What could have become of him?—and what had brought back Antonia from Geneva?

The explanation was soon made;—and though Lord Farrington's pride prompted him,

in the first instance, to obtain it without betraying his feelings or his misconceptions, when he became fully aware that Antonia was still and still likely to remain, Antonia Greyville,—and that the new Mrs. Rosse was an intimate friend, promoted by her interference to fill the place so long and faithfully reserved for herself,—he no longer scrupled to avow the pangs and self-reproaches with which he had greeted her union with another. The time for hesitation or delicacy was over. He had too long trifled with his own happiness. His stars had served him better than he had served himself; and since it was his better fortune to meet with the object of his boyish friendship still unshackled by any nearer tie, still uninfluenced by any fonder emotion, he had nothing to do but to fall on his knees, to thank Providence in the first place, and implore the boon of Antonia's hand in the second.

Lord Farrington could not, in fact, say too little in addition to the assurance of his attachment and the offer of his hand; while Miss Greyville fancied that she could not say too

much in extenuation of the weakness prompting her to accept the proffered gift, in spite of the weak, wicked, and ungenerous preference so long bestowed upon her worthless rival.

Probably his lordship thought it unnecessary to hazard her displeasure in defence of a bosom friend who had proved so much his enemy; for he suffered Miss Greyville to pourtray uninterrupted the years of mortification she had endured in witnessing his alienation from herself, his devotion to another;—listened very patiently to all the “fair spirit” whom he wished to become his new “minister” thought proper to urge;—and when she had exhausted her accusations, renewed his original inquiry of—“In spite of all my faults,—all my follies,—will you deign to be mine?”

The gentle Antonia was not implacable. Secure in her own purity and steadiness of mind, she had no fear of provoking the scoffs of society; and cared very little whether Frank Bradshaw and Co. were likely to infer that she was accepted as a *pis-aller* by the minister who had been turned out, and the lover who had

been turned off. And she had every encouragement in the approval of her own family. Lady Gertrude, rejoicing in so diverting an incident as a sister's marriage, admitted she was now very glad that Antonia should have been so obstinate in refusing Captain Rosse;—while Bob had never been more overjoyed in his life than by the prospect of finding a brother-in-law in “the playmate of his infancy,”—whose preserves were so near and so very superior to those of Greyville Park.

Thanks to their residence abroad, the marriage of Berkley and Antonia was curtailed of a considerable proportion of that pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious wedlock, which in England converts Hymen's saffron vest into an armour of buckram. They were united in the chapel of the embassy at Florence; and set forward on a tour to the South. Neither was in any haste to return to England. Lord Farrington dreaded the possibility of a recall to public life; and his bride,—nay, even his wife,—nay, even the mother of a little Lord Murray, who made his appearance at Naples the follow-

ing year,—could not divest herself of a certain degree of terror of a certain Lady Clermont, of whose whereabouts the English newspapers were still only too apt to prate; whose bon-mots were duly commemorated, and whose hospitalities blazoned for the admiration of Europe.

Nearly three years elapsed before the bon-fires blazed, and the bells rang, in honour of the arrival of the Earl and Countess at Farrington Castle; but some months previous to that joyful event, the sun of the *intrigante* had set for ever. Just as a patent for the Barony of Oaklands was made out in favour of Sir Thomas, his hitherto imperturbable equanimity of conjugal patience suddenly gave way. Some said that he had formed a scheme for gilding the balls of his new coronet by an alliance with the widow of a President of the Calcutta Council, lately arrived in a homeward-bound ship freighted with pearls and pagodas;—some said that Nancy (forgetting her husband was better versed than the rest of the world in the mysteries of her birth, parentage, and education)

had ventured to display the most insulting contempt of his own. But having once conceived a wish to get rid of her, the means were readily at his disposal. Easy as he had found it to close his eyes against her proceedings, it was still easier to open them when it suited his purpose;—to dismiss the offender from his house,—smite her with the strong arm of the law,—assume the plaintive martyrdom of “an injured husband, deprived of the world’s best blessing, the society of a beloved wife;”—and drive forth the pseudo Lady Oaklands,—as the disgraced, the despised, the *divorced* Anne Danby!—The new partner of her frailty was a married man;—there was no redemption for her,—no atonement,—no consolation. The Right Hon. Lord Oaklands gave his hand to Mrs. Kibaub;—the Right Hon. the Earl of Farrington had already given both hand and heart to the prudent and wise Antonia;—and Nancy, having circumnavigated the sphere of ambition, found herself obliged to end where she began,—as a boarder and lodger in the obscure village of Dyning-

ton!—It were an unnecessary degradation of human nature to pourtray the last hopeless, helpless, shameless years, of a conscience-seared and defeated—*Intrigante!*

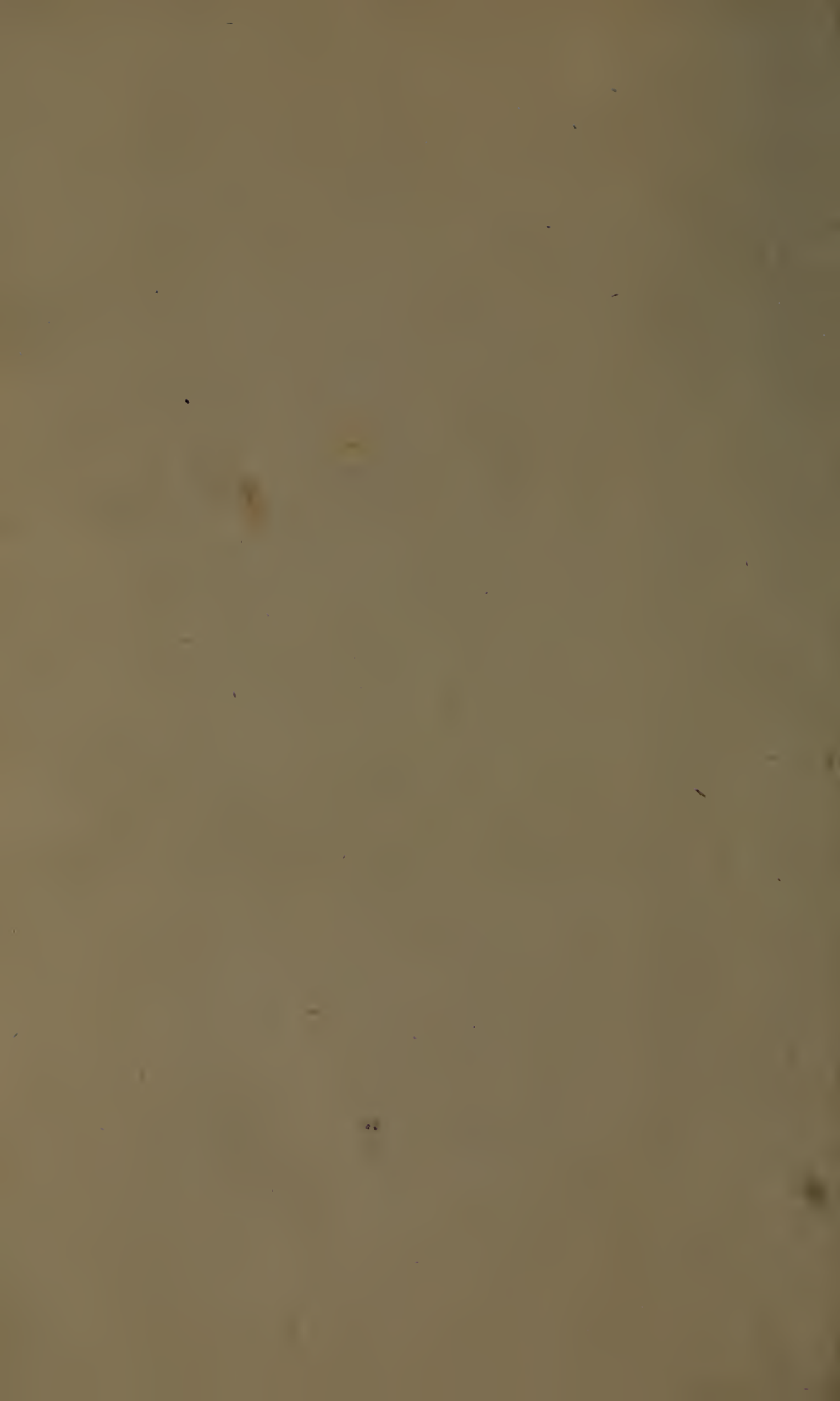
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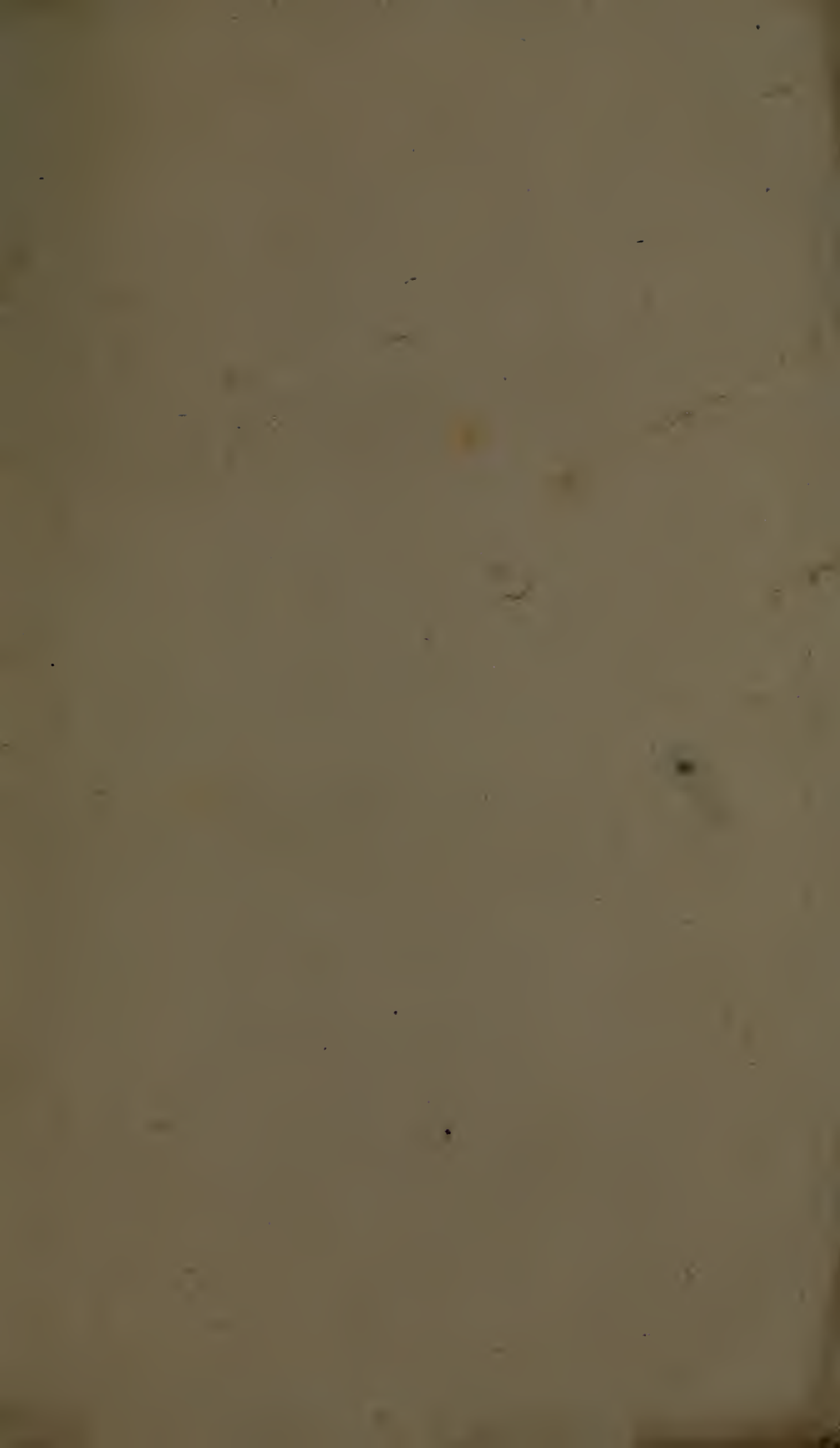




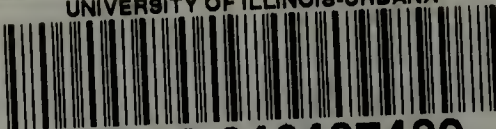








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